

Wednesday April 22 1998

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The Guardian

INTERNATIONAL

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Interview

Rud Gullit: the thinking playboy?

G2 with European weather

Portrait of an author

Generation X-hausted: why Douglas Coupland is tired of the nineties

G2 pages 10-11

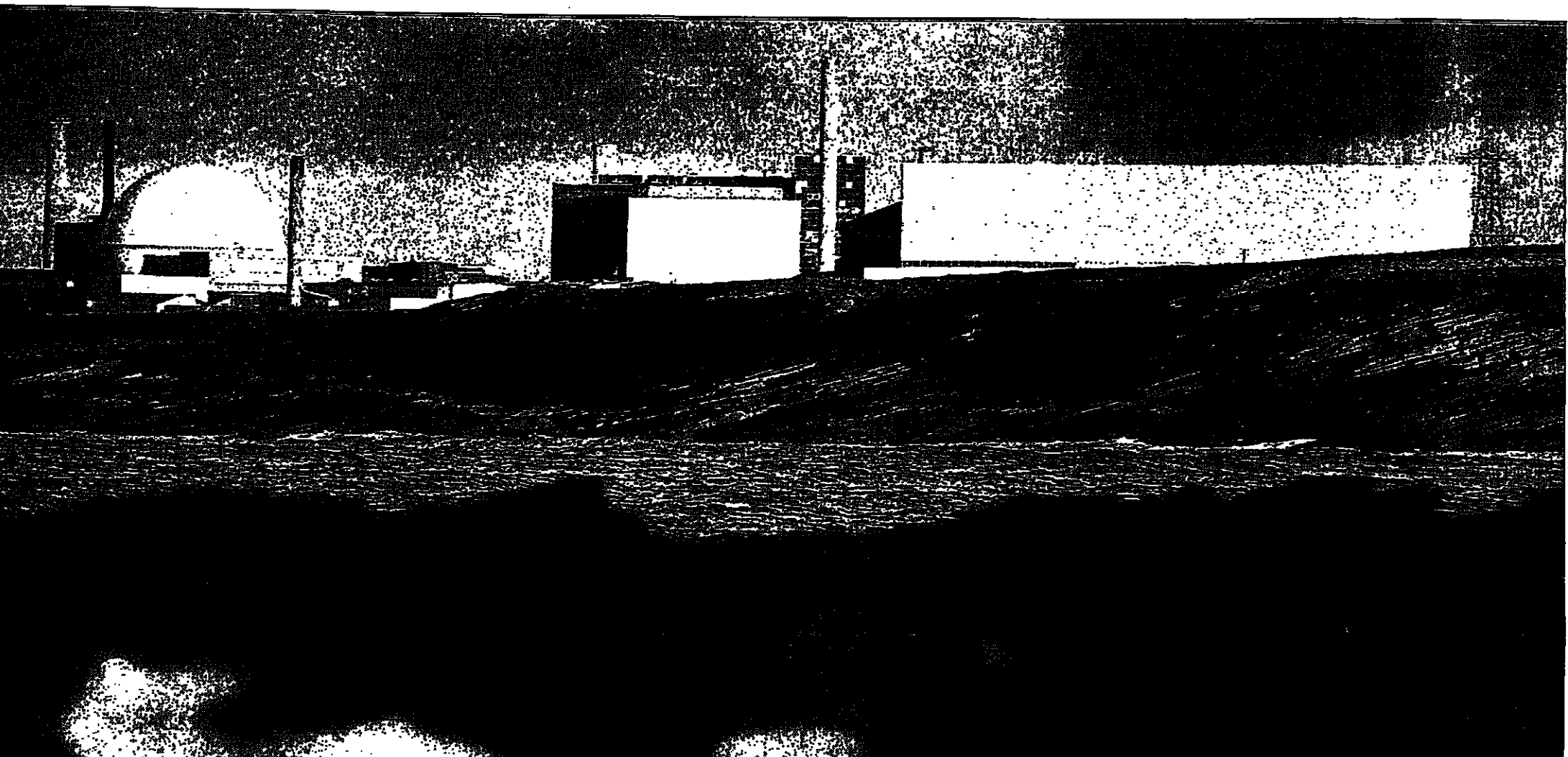
Environment

The global economy is booming, but...

Society, G2 pages 12/13

Special dispensation for Dounreay after Blair-Clinton accord

Secret nuclear deal



Dounreay nuclear reprocessing plant in Scotland, which will handle the weapons-grade material. It had been banned from commercially importing material pending a safety review

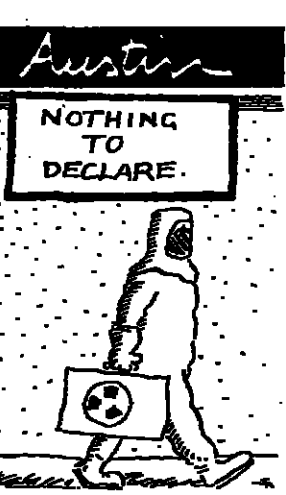
PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MACLEOD

Shipment due in UK within days

James Meek in Moscow, Paul Brown and Mike White

DOWNING Street was accused last night of engaging in secret nuclear deals after it was forced to admit that Tony Blair had agreed with US President Bill Clinton to accept a cache of highly radioactive, weapons-grade material from the former Soviet Union for reprocessing at Dounreay in Scotland.

A US military transport aircraft is due to touch down in Britain later this week with 5kg of highly enriched weapons-grade uranium from a research reactor in Tbilisi, Georgia, thought to be vulnerable to terrorists and the agents of rogue regimes.



'This plan is dangerous and ill-conceived. No wonder they're being secretive'

Pete Roche, Greenpeace

Kevin Dunlop, director of Friends of the Earth Scotland, said: "The major reason the US decided not to have its own waste reprocessed at Dounreay was due to the fact that it believed it would prove to be a major proliferation risk. Today's decision smacks of hypocrisy."

Downing Street, caught on the hop by the US media leak, described the enriched uranium as "a small quantity" which Dounreay would be able to convert easily for medical use. The deal was not commercial and had stemmed from fears the material might fall into the wrong hands.

"Circumstances in Georgia are such that it makes sense according to our various obligations, not least with the G8 [the leading industrialised nations plus Russia] in relation to nuclear safety and non-proliferation that it should be brought from Georgia," said a spokesman at Number 10.

He defended the secrecy of the operation. "For obvious reasons the movement of this sort of stuff is kept confidential. There's no sense in making public the transportation of material of this type."

The existence of the Tbilisi cache has caused nightmares for Western security agencies and the Georgian government since the country gained independence in 1991.

Georgia is economically prostrate: its 70-year-old president, the former Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze, has no clear successor and has been the

subject of two elaborate assassination attempts.

Regional and personal rivalries have repeatedly exploded into bloody anarchy. During the civil war of 1992, when rival warlords fought running battles in Tbilisi, the research reactor, part of Georgia's Institute of Physics, was unguarded.

Two regions of Georgia — South Ossetia and Abkhazia — are partly or wholly out of Tbilisi's control, and a state of war still exists with a third, Abkhazia. Georgia borders the separatist Russian region of Chechnya and is a short drive from Iran.

US efforts to spirit the material out of harm's way began two years ago. American specialists bricked up the room containing the uranium, installed close circuit TV and an alarm system and began — with Mr Shevardnadze's support — to negotiate with possible recipient countries. Britain finally accepted after months of talks.

The threat of ex-Soviet nuclear materials falling into the hands of terrorists or regimes hostile to the US and Israel, such as Iraq, Iran or

Libya, has haunted Western security agencies ever since the Soviet Union collapsed.

Russia has tens of thousands of nuclear warheads. Tons of enriched uranium, plutonium and spent nuclear fuel are kept in 16 nuclear power stations, more than 100 research reactors and reprocessing plants and many decommissioned nuclear submarines in the former Soviet Union.

Gold war relics, page 6

Murdoch marriage break-up shakes media industry

Kamal Ahmed and Simon Storr

THE MOST powerful media partnership in the world, the marriage of Rupert and Anna Murdoch, is over after 31 years. The split, announced in the Murdoch-owned New York Post, caused shock waves in the media industry as analysts considered the effect of such a separation on the \$8 billion Murdoch media empire.

Although not considered a key player, Anna was the director of a number of Murdoch-owned companies and was on the board of

News Corporation in which the family are the major shareholders.

News Corporation said last night that Anna, aged 64, would remain on the board and it appears she will also retain the directorships of the Murdoch-owned companies News America Holdings and News America Publishing.

"As long as she stays on the board it would be unfortunate if any bad blood were to manifest itself," one senior industry source said.

Mr Murdoch's spokesman in New York, Howard Rubenstein, insisted that the separation was not bad

tempered and would not affect the operation of the global business.

It embraces nearly every aspect of cinema, television and newspapers including four British titles (the Times, the Sunday Times, the Sun and the News of the World), control of BSkyB and, in America, the Fox TV network, the 20th Century Fox studio and the New York Post.

Friends have even suggested the couple may patch up their differences. "This is a shot over the bow," said one friend, quoted in the New York Daily News, the Post's rival.

"There is nobody else.

They will probably work things out but Anna has been trying to get him to slow down for some time.

"Murdoch is working so hard, travelling all the time, that she feels his pace is too much. She loves him, they both love their children."

The couple's children, Elisabeth, Lachlan and James, have been promoted to high positions within the empire and encouraged to vie for the succession by their father, aged 67.

"Maybe no single person can take over all the reins if and when Rupert retires," an analyst said. "There may be no one who

can run the businesses like Rupert."

Mr Murdoch revealed last November that the children had come to the consensus that Lachlan, already the head of News Australia, was his most likely successor even though this would consign the older sister, Elisabeth, to a secondary role.

Mr Murdoch suggested his 26-year-old son would act as "first among equals" in the future. But the tycoon stressed he intended to stay at the helm for as long as he remained "competent" and insisted the children still had to "prove themselves first".

Elisabeth, aged 30, is the general manager of BSkyB and is known to be keen to follow in her father's footsteps.

It was at first thought that Anna would take over in a "prince regent" role from her husband if he had to retire early due to ill-health.

But the growing indications that Lachlan is being groomed to take over mean that Anna, also a novelist, has a less pivotal role to play in the future of the company.

Casualties in scramble for succession, page 5; Roy Greenfield, G2, page 4

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SEE INSIDE FOR DETAILS
 (Contour pages)

NOTHING MOVES YOU LIKE A CITROËN

Sketch

Neillies miss the standard model



Simon Hoggart

THE Neill Committee on standards in public life met yesterday to take evidence from, among others, the Labour Party.

Their title may just say "standards", but what these Neillies really believe in are high standards. The absolute tops. In fact, they have drawn up and printed Seven Principles of Public Life. These are Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty and Leadership. And sitting round camp fires going "dib dib dib".

Where have these people been? You might as well ask a rugby team to cleave to the principles of Gentleness, Consideration and Turning the Other Cheek. Or tell a Zen Buddhist monk to get stuck in. It isn't what they exist for.

Tom Sawyer, the General Secretary of the Labour Party, arrived in shop steward mode. Addressing Lord Neill as "Chai", he said how grateful he was "to help you in your endeavours and to assist you with your deliberations".

He then proposed to read a lengthy statement. Lord Neill gently pointed out that this would not be necessary. "We do put opening statements on the public record," he said. A look of mild panic crossed Mr Sawyer's face. (Well, actually his face was turned away from me. A look of mild panic crossed his back.) For an old union apparition to begin without an opening statement would be like the Archbishop of Canterbury starting dinner without grace. Or for Prince Margaret to kick off without a gin and a flag.

"To make sure it is on the public record I would like to read it out," he said grimly. The correct answer to this would have been "But, you great pillock, it's just said it goes on the record." However, Lord Neill is far too polite for that, so he murmured "Please do," and Mr Sawyer did.

Review

A journey to the edge of survival

Lyn Gardner

Tir Na N-Og
Unicorn Theatre, London

THE less acclaimed follow-up to the hugely successful *My Left Foot*, Jim Sheridan's film into the West has been adapted by Travelling Light, the Bristol-based company dedicated to theatre for children and young people.

I had heard encouraging rumours about this modern Irish urban fairy tale. Even so, I wasn't prepared for just how brilliant it is, much better than Mike Newell's 1992 movie, largely because it is grittier and far less whimsical.

Sentiment is cut with comedy and there are no guaranteed happy endings. This isn't just exceptional children's theatre, it is complex, vivid and moving theatre. Motherless Ally and Finn, who live in a Dublin tower block with their neglectful father, the former King of the Road, are given a beautiful white horse by their grandparents, who keeps to a travellers' life. The horse is called *Tir Na N-Og*, after the mythical Irish legend where it is always summer and no one grows old.

When the authorities take a dim view of a horse being kept on the 14th floor, and the chief of police tries to swindle the children out of the animal, Ally and Finn are taken by *Tir Na N-Og* on an epic journey to the edge of Ireland, which is as much emotional as it is physical, and which stretches them to the limits of their survival. An adult blend of dirty realism and magic realism, Greg Banks's script (he also directed) doesn't flinch at telling it like it really is.

How many kids' shows have you seen where dad is on the bottle, and which slip in lines such as "Are you a member of an illegal organisation?" And where prejudice and poverty are portrayed as hard facts of life, not dressed up in Dickensian whimsy?

On a minimal set and to the accompaniment of a single musician, the cast populate the stage with 20 or so characters, who range from the drunken police chief to the children's broken pa. That's when they're not busy impersonating the roaring, storm-flecked sea or taking it in turns to transform themselves from human to animal to portray the mysterious wild horse which can leap a car in a twinkling and which takes the children to the very west of Ireland where they receive a symbolic baptism and choose life over death, their future over their past.

Like the company's storytelling style, the performances have an affecting matter-of-factness. Cerianne Roberts and Craig Edwards are as convincing as the asthmatic eight-year-old Ally and her protective elder brother as they are as busy-body grown-ups.

Joe Hall cracks your heart as the father, whose whiskey tears of grief for his dead wife blind him to the needs of his small children.

It is a remarkable, mature piece of theatre which creates a complete imaginative world of its own and which treats its young audience with a generous and quiet respect. This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

Strasbourg job for English QC

NICOLAS Bratza, an English QC, was elected yesterday as Britain's first full-time judge at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

He announced solemnly that political parties were important, and that their members were important too. "This concept was developed by Tony Blair during the many years of Opposition," he wistfully said.

You'd have thought from his reverential tone that this Great Idea ("people are important") had been dreamed up by Chairman Mao during the Long March, or the Equally Tedious April.

In fact, the concept as designed by Tony Blair is that people should phone the Labour Party, read out their credit card number, and leave the rest to him.

But by this time Mr Sawyer was away. The Labour Party, he said, was now "robust, modern, active, vibrant and growing". (He didn't say anything about social justice.)

There were, however, problems with party funding. "We could be vibrant more regularly if these problems were cleared up."

What did he mean? How can you be regularly vibrant? Was vibrancy some kind of euphemistic code? It was not explained.

The drift of Mr Sawyer's remarks was that the Labour Party was open and honest about its funding, unlike another major party which he could name, but chose not to.

Lord Neill seemed sceptical in a courteous sort of way. Was it not true that lobbyists could buy batches of Labour policy documents for £1,000 a time? Or attend policy forums for £100? Wasn't this a form of funding?

Mr Sawyer replied with a majestic obtuseness: "I think that is a fair question, and I only wish I could give you an answer which would allow you to go home and write your report without delay, but it is more complicated than that, and I am being very honest here."

Oh, right. Margaret McDonagh, Mr Sawyer's deputy, and a woman who is thought likely to replace him perhaps even sooner than Mr Sawyer expects, explained about the "One Thousand Club" which includes people who pledge at least a grand a year. For this they get to have dinner with a cabinet minister.

Or, if they promise 2K they get the dinner without the minister. (Just my little joke.)

Tiger of Europe undergoes 'staggering growth' while Britain approaches economic relegation zone

Thriving Ireland passes UK

Larry Elliott
Economics Editor

BRITAIN has been overtaken by booming Ireland in the world league table for economic competitiveness and is in danger of being relegated to the second division of nations, according to a report released today.

The annual study of 46 countries from a Swiss-based think-tank showed Britain slipping one place to 12th out of the 15 economies in the first rank.

But while Ireland has been the success story of the past few years, other countries in Europe — including the three big economies of Germany, France and Italy — have fared less well.

On evidence culled from hard data and surveys, the International Institute for Management Development said Germany dropped from sixth position in the mid-

1990s to 14th — second to bottom of the first division. France slipped two places to 21st — one place behind Malaysia — while Italy, despite some improvement over the past 12 months, was rooted at the bottom of the second division in 80th spot.

Even so, the problems of Europe were dwarfed by those of recession-hit Japan, which was rated the second most competitive nation in the world in the early 1990s, but the year fell from ninth to 18th place.

"Japan has suffered a nine-place drop in competitiveness that reflects a complete disarray of the economy. The 16,000 billion yen economic stimulus and the recent reform plan of the financial sector could perhaps stop the decline of the second largest economy in the world," the institute said.

Although some eminent economists argue that the whole concept of competitiveness between nations is meaningless, the institute

says there is merit in ranking countries by looking at the eight separate categories — the strength of the domestic economy, the degree of internationalisation, government, the financial system, infrastructure, management, science and technology, and people.

The think-tank's World Competitiveness Yearbook hailed the recent performance of the United States, which it said was "strongly installed in its position as the most competitive nation in the world".

"Privatisation, deregulation, flexibility in the labour market, and especially massive investment in new technology has worked. Only a major crash in the stock market or, in the long term, complacency could threaten a situation that is historically exceptional".

Apart from the US, the IMD praised the two Asian city-state economies — Singapore and Hong Kong — and said that the strong showing of the

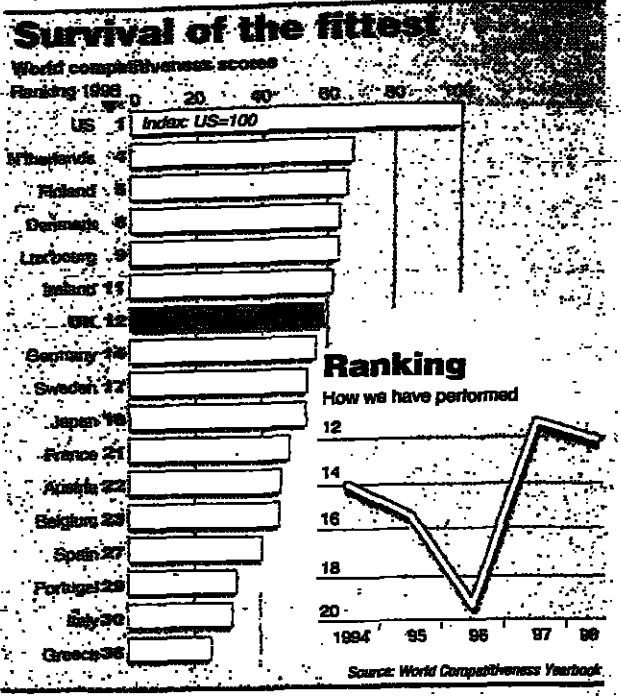
Netherlands in fourth place reflected the "remarkable success of the reform of its economy".

It added that Ireland continued to be the "Tiger of Europe" with the government's policy of attracting inward investment responsible for "staggering growth" over the past few years. Ireland's rating has gone up from 22nd two years ago to 11th.

Last year, the think-tank showed Britain rising sharply up the competitiveness league table from 19th to 11th, a finding which the previous government seized on in the run-up to the election as evidence of the success of Conservative economic policies.

The report said that the change of government last May did not appear to have affected the pace of economic reforms, which were now "well embedded" in national politics. However, it said the strength of the pound could become a problem.

City Notebook, page 12



Judge rules beef-on-bone ban absurd

Pressure grows to scrap law

Lawrence Donegan

AGRICULTURE minister Jack Cunningham was under pressure to scrap the beef-on-the-bone ban last night after the first prosecution was thrown out of court.

The case against Jim Sutherland, who served beef on the bone at a dinner for 180 people last December, was dismissed at Selkirk sheriff court after it was ruled that the wording of the legislation imposing the ban last December was defective and "manifestly absurd".

Farmers' leaders and opposition spokesman claimed the ban was left in tatters after Sheriff James Paterson said the Beef Bones Regulations (1997) was too vague and that it criminalised anyone involved in the preparation of beef, including anyone who stored it in refrigerators prior to distributing it to caterers and butchers.

Mr Sutherland, who owns the Lodge hotel near Selkirk, staged the "Farmers' Dinner" on December 22, five days after the Government ban.

He said he was delighted at the court's ruling. "It shows that the Government has got it seriously wrong on this occasion. The wording of the regulations is absolutely crazy and if I was Dr Cunningham I would have a look at this ruling," he said.

The prosecution confirmed it intended to appeal. Dr Cunningham said last night that it would make no difference to the legislation. "This case turned on a legal technicality, the regulations are essential for the protection of public health and they remain in force," he said in a statement.

A spokeswoman for the National Farmers' Union de-



Lamb to the slaughter... Jim Sutherland celebrating victory yesterday. "If I was Dr Cunningham I would have a look at this ruling" PHOTOGRAPH: MURDO MacLEOD

scribed yesterday's events in Selkirk as a "victory for common sense".

"We believe that the regulation should never have been introduced in the first place," he said. "We believe consumers should have a right to choose whether or not to eat beef on the bone. The latest evidence shows that the risks posed by eating beef on the bone are minimal."

Michael Jack, the Conservative's agriculture spokesman, called on the Government to scrap the ban.

"We have always believed that the regulations were a recipe for chaos and confusion, as people never knew

whether or not they were covered by the ban," he said. "Any right-minded person knows that the public should be given the right to decide whether or not they buy beef on the bone."

The ban was introduced in an attempt to convince the European Commission to lift the ban on sales of British beef.

Sheriff Paterson's ruling hinged on the meaning of "preparation" in regulation 3(2) of the Act which states that "no person shall use any bone-in-beef in the preparation of any food or ingredient for sale direct to the ultimate consumer".

Rail industry may face manslaughter charge

Kelvin Harper
Transport Editor

THE first ever corporate manslaughter charges to be brought against the rail industry are being considered over September's Southall rail crash, British Transport Police confirmed last night.

The force said a decision would be announced within weeks now that the driver of the train which crashed at Southall, west London, killing seven people, has been charged with manslaughter.

A spokesman said: "We are still investigating the crash with officials of the Health and Safety Executive. As a result of our inquiries, companies could be charged with corporate manslaughter."

The companies involved in the rail disaster, the worst since 1988 when 35 people were killed in Clapham, were Great Western Trains, which has just been taken over by the train and bus operator First Group, the rail freight com-

pany English, Welsh and Scottish Railway, and Railtrack. Great Western is the train operating company whose Swansea to London express collided with an empty freight train. Evidence that the passenger train's automatic warning system was not working is being examined by police and the Health and Safety Executive.

English, Welsh and Scottish is the company whose freight train was crossing the line in front of the approaching express. Railtrack is responsible for maintenance of the signalling and track.

The driver, Larry Harrison, will appear before Ealing magistrates' court on May 27. He has been on police bail for several months and is receiving legal support from the train drivers' union, Aslef.

The Health and Safety Executive said corporate manslaughter charges had never been brought in the rail industry. British Rail admitted liability within hours for the Clapham disaster, caused during a change to signalling.

Low Adams, Aslef's general secretary, said he would meet the deputy prime minister, John Prescott, to express "real concerns" about safety in the rail industry. "Our members increasingly feel that we are the custodians of safety. We have issued instructions to drivers not to take out trains if they know there is a problem."

Mr Adams said Aslef was upset that Mr Harrison had been charged with manslaughter when other factors were "clearly involved".

Criminal proceedings against Mr Harrison could delay wider inquiries into rail safety since privatisation. "It means that the public may not be given the full facts about the reasons for the Southall rail crash for two years," Mr Adams said.

The Health and Safety Executive said the Southall inquiry would proceed as quickly as possible after criminal charges had been cleared up. "Any lessons which have been learned about the accident will be applied."

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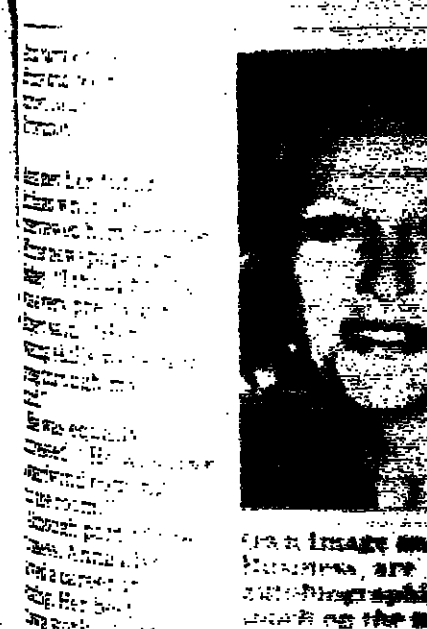
The Murdoch dynasty

THE MURDOCH DYNASTY: A family portrait of the media tycoon's empire. The Murdoch family, including Rupert Murdoch, is shown in a formal setting, with Rupert Murdoch in the center, wearing a suit and tie, and his family members around him.

The media mogul's method of sorting out the succession between his children — a contest for empire — appears to have proved his wife

Casualties

Casualties: A report on the impact of the Southall rail crash. The text describes the lives of those affected by the disaster, including the families of the victims and the community in Southall.



Hint of life in

Hint of life in: A report on the lives of those affected by the Southall rail crash. The text describes the struggles and hopes of the families of the victims, and the impact of the disaster on the community.

سكنا من الامل

The Murdoch dynasty

IMAGINATION and fiction make up more than three quarters of Rupert Murdoch's life, says his wife, Anna.

It is with some personal sadness that I announce the untimely separation of Rupert Murdoch and his beautiful wife, Anna, after 32 years of marriage and three children. The Murdochs say their situation is very painful and leaves them torn, but they are attempting to work out their differences. Mrs Murdoch, a novelist and playwright, will remain on the board and continue in the Murdoch business.

The media mogul's method of sorting out the succession between his children - a contest for success in his empire - appears to have proved most galling to his wife



The smiles that mask the truth, printed in the New York Post (above left), as the Murdochs fell out over his work and method of choosing the child to succeed him

News Corporation

Employees	24,000
Revenue	\$5.4 bn
Of which: Film	\$1.6 bn
Television	\$1.4 bn
Newspapers	\$1.2 bn
Magazines	\$0.6 bn
Book publishing	\$0.3 bn
Other	\$0.3 bn

'Anna's the most critical at board meetings. She'll speak up, you bet she does. She's there to keep the door open for the children to come along'

Rupert Murdoch in 1993 interview

Casualties in the scramble for succession

Kamal Ahmed and Simon Beavis

IT WAS the family dynasty to beat all family dynasties. The all-powerful father, the children battling for the right to succeed him, and the wife, cool adviser, novelist and right-hand woman who decided yesterday that, finally, enough was enough.

After 31 years of marriage Anna Murdoch has left the most powerful media magnate in the world.

The method of announcement was simple. It came by

way of Liz Smith, the gossip columnist in the New York Post, a newspaper that Rupert Murdoch owns.

"It is with some personal sadness that I announce the amicable separation of Rupert Murdoch and his beautiful wife, Anna, after 31 years of marriage and three children," the article said.

"The Murdochs say their situation is very painful and leaves them torn but they are attempting to work out their differences. Mrs Murdoch will remain on the board and continue in the Murdoch business."

It is inconceivable that

such a sensitive issue would be aired in the newspaper without the family's say-so. The family's New York publicist would only confirm the report was accurate and that the split "would not affect the business in any way".

The Post's rival, The New York Daily News, immediately started following the trail. No, the newspaper said, there is no "third person" involved, the Murdochs have just run out of steam.

Well-placed sources suggest that Anna has been concerned about her husband's work rate since at least the early 1980s. The man, aged 67

and famed for his ability to survive on three hours sleep a night, just would not slow down. Now his eyes are firmly set on expanding his empire into China and the European continent. On Monday there was a first ever deal in Russia.

Anna, aged 54, realised that her pleas for him to take it a little easier and spend more time with her at their house outside Los Angeles were not being heeded. It was time to break away.

She has always been an important player in the Murdoch empire. In 1983 Rupert told the author Nicholas Cole-

ridge: "I find Anna's the most critical of all our directors at board meetings. I say to her afterwards: 'Why didn't you say that at home if that's what you think?' She'll speak up, you bet she does. She's got the least to fear! She's there because I just want the assurance, should anything happen to me, that there'll be someone keeping the door open for the children to come along."

She will still be a main board director of News Corporation, and it was likely that she would also retain her other directorships.

There was also the issue of the family succession for

Anna, a strong Catholic who is unlikely to contemplate divorce. Rupert is driven by what Andrew Neil, the former editor of the Sunday Times, has called a "dynastic obsession". The same drive helped him to take over his father's Australian newspaper business at 21 and turn it into a global empire worth \$8.4 billion.

It also saw him pick off all distant family shareholdings and bring them under the control of a central nominee accounts, Cruden, controlled by the immediate family.

With characteristic vagueness - befitting a deliber-

ately opaque business empire - he revealed last year the shares had been transferred to the children's control.

The media mogul's method of sorting out the succession between his children appears to have proved most galling to his wife. It has led him to pit the three children against each other to prove themselves as the most worthy successor to the News Corp throne, a chair he has said he will remain in while he remains "compos mentis".

Late last year, in the book Sky High by Mathew Horsman, Rupert revealed that the children had come to a con-

sensus that Lachlan would take over and act as "first among equals".

If it was this dynastic scramble organised by the father that led to the final break down of the marriage, Anna may have seen it coming for some time.

It was with unusual prescience that Anna wrote the novel Family Business, published in 1988 - the story of a family led by a media mogul which is ripped apart by bitter in-fighting over the issue of the succession.

In real life, the Murdoch marriage may have foundered on the very same rocks.

Anna Murdoch, 54, director and board member, News Corporation

Anna met her future husband when she interviewed him for the Mirror newspaper in Sydney. "I thought she was a very pretty girl," Rupert said. "Her writing skills were not going through my mind."

She was equally impressed. "He was like a whirlwind coming into the room."

Although part of the business, Anna also carved a career in writing. Her best known works, in her



Own Image and Family Business, are autobiographical and touch on the media world.

Elisabeth Murdoch, 30, general manager, BSkyB

Elisabeth has never made a secret of her desire to follow in her father's footsteps and is as ambitious as her high-flying brother, Lachlan. However, she seems to have been eclipsed by him.

Although she started in newspapers, she soon made television her main interest. She arrived in Britain in 1996 after managing stations in California with Ghanaian-born Elkin Plamim, who she married. They have now separated. Most famously failed



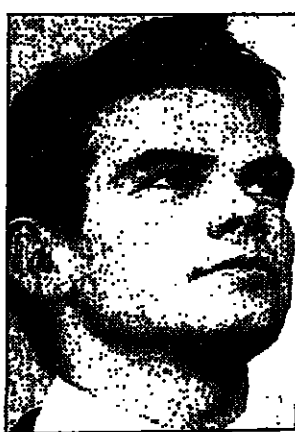
to see eye to eye with BSkyB bruiser and former chief executive, Sam Chisholm. He left and she remained.

Lachlan Murdoch, 26, main director of News Corp and chief executive of News Australia

He appears to be his father's choice to succeed him at News Corporation.

The Princeton-educated executive has received the most intensive training in the business and is the only one of the three siblings to have made it to the highest echelons. He runs News Corp's Australian interests and is on the main board.

He appears to be a chip off the old block, often emulating his



father's grand talk of a world full of business opportunities, and also relaxes - one day a week - by sailing.

James Murdoch, 23, head of News Corps US new media interests

Appeared for a while to be following the footsteps of Murdoch's eldest daughter and his own step sister, Pru, showing clear signs of shunning a career in the family firm. Often described as the most bohemian of Anna's three children, he was educated at Harvard and then tried to make his way in the record industry.

But he recently took control of News Corp's burgeoning new media interests in the US. Elisabeth has suggested



that he may turn out to be the true challenger for the throne but few observers took her seriously.

Hint of life in solar system discovered 25 light years from the Earth

John Eard

EVIDENCE of a possible new solar system up to 25 light years from Earth was announced yesterday. It confirmed, this would be the first discovery of a solar system of rock-based planets outside our own.

Huge disc-shaped areas of dust have been found around Vega, the brightest star in the summer sky, and another star, Fomalhaut. Yesterday a team of British and American astronomers released pictures of the dust and said they might "reveal planetary systems in formation."

"Planets in our galaxy may

be more common than scientists previously believed."

The British Astronomical Society said the find was "a step forward, an important part of a developing picture".

The announcement boosts hopes of discovering life beyond Earth, if only because conditions for the development of life forms are thought

to be better on rocky than on gas-based planets.

But the two stars are so far away that the presence of planets around them is unlikely to be confirmed or disproved, at least until medium-size telescopes are installed in the clarity of space within the next two or three years. British and American projects to

launch bigger telescopes have not yet received funding.

The dust - believed to be grains of silica - was spotted in radio telescope images studying light in "sub-millimetre" wavelengths.

Astronomers in Hawaii used a revolutionary camera built at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh. Team leader

Wayne Holland said the camera used detectors cooled to almost absolute zero to measure tiny amounts of heat emission from dust particles.

Another of the team, Chris McCarthy, said these instruments were "the beginning of a new era of research". One of the most intriguing images showed a hole in the middle

of the dust disc around Fomalhaut, which is 22 light years from Earth and 13 times brighter than the Sun.

Dr Holland said this suggested dust near the star was "largely cleared out". A probable explanation is that it has formed into rocky planets like the Earth - even though we can not detect these directly."

Ben Zuckerman, physics and astronomy professor at the University of California, Los Angeles, said: "It is generally believed that our solar system formed out of such a disc. But whether the newly discovered discs contain majestic planets like Jupiter or Saturn, or just comets and asteroids, remains to be seen".

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One of a set of photos taken by Mary McCartney of her mother at their home in East Sussex a few days before the trip to California, where she died. The pictures, the last of Linda McCartney, were released yesterday

McCartney tells of last bedside moments with dying Linda

Annela Goussens

SIR Paul McCartney spoke yesterday about his "total heartbreak" at the death of his wife Linda from cancer.

In a tribute to his wife of almost 30 years, he said: "She was unique and the world is a

better place for having known her."

He said he had talked to her in her dying moments in Santa Barbara, California, on Friday. "I said to her 'You're up on your beautiful Appaloosa stallion. It's a fine spring day, we're riding through the woods. The bluebells are all out, and the sky

is clear blue.' I had barely got to the end of the sentence when she closed her eyes and gently slipped away."

The statement, released by Sir Paul's press office, made plain his grief. "Linda was, and still is, the love of my life."

He described her as a very private person who had been the kindest and most innocent woman he had met. She was also the toughest woman he had met, "who didn't give a damn about what other people thought". Few could rival her abilities as a photographer, he said, and "as a mother, she was the best."

If people wanted to pay tribute to her, they should turn to vegetarianism in recognition of the "unbelievable" courage she had shown in her campaign for animal rights. The tribute, which was

signed with six kisses, said she had never complained about her illness and had always hoped to conquer it. Sir Paul was at home yesterday with his family in Peasmarsh, East Sussex.

● Tens of thousands of children in Rome are to be served a "Linda menu" vegetarian meal next week at school in memory of Linda McCartney. "She was always in the front line of social and environmental campaigns and, right to the end, looked ill in the face and believed in life with joy and determination," said Rome councillor Fiorella Farinelli.

She added: "We have become accustomed to relying on a unlimited exploitation of the natural environment, animals included. In my opinion, to think about these things a bit, without going too far, cannot but be helpful."

'The tribute she would have liked best would be for people to go vegetarian'

Text of the statement released by Sir Paul:

THIS is a total heartbreak for my family and I. Linda was, and still is, the love of my life, and the past two years we spent battling her disease have been a nightmare.

She never complained and always hoped to be able to conquer it. It was not to be.

Our beautiful children — Heather, Mary, Stella and James — have been an incredible strength during this time, and she lives on in all of them.

The courage she showed to fight for her causes of vegetarianism and animal welfare was unbelievable. How many women can you think of who would singlehandedly take on opponents like the Meat and Livestock Commission, risk

being laughed at, and yet succeed?

People who didn't know her well, because she was a very private person, only ever saw the tip of the iceberg. She was the kindest woman I have ever met; the most innocent.

All animals to her were like Disney characters and worthy of love and respect. She was the toughest woman who didn't give a damn what other people thought. She found it hard to be impressed by the fact that she was Lady McCartney. When asked whether people called her Lady McCartney, she said "Somebody once did — I think."

I am privileged to have been her lover for 30 years, and in all that time, except for one enforced absence, we never spent a single night apart.

When people asked why, we would say "What for?"

As a photographer there are few to rival her. Her photographs show an intense honesty, a rare eye for beauty. As a mother she was the best. We always said that all we wanted for the kids was that they would grow up to have good hearts; and they have.

Our family is so close that her passing has left a huge hole in our lives. We will never get over it, but I think we will come to accept it.

The tribute she would have liked best would be for people to go vegetarian, which, with the vast variety of foods available these days, is much easier than many people think. She got into the food business for one reason only, to save animals from the cruel treatment our society and traditions force upon them.

Anyone less likely to be a business woman can't think of yet she worked tirelessly for the rights of animals, and

became a food tycoon. When told a rival firm had copied one of her products, all she would say was "Great, now I can retire". She wasn't in it for the money.

In the end, she went quickly with very little discomfort, and surrounded by her loved ones.

The kids and I were there when she crossed over. They each were able to tell her how much they loved her.

Finally I said to her: "You're up on your beautiful Appaloosa stallion, it's a fine spring day, we're riding through the woods. The bluebells are all out, and the sky is clear blue."

I had barely got to the end of the sentence, when she closed her eyes, and gently slipped away.

She was unique and the world is a better place for having known her. Her message of love will live on in our hearts forever. I love you Linda. Paul xxxxxx

Audition to find sensitive toy soldier with killer instinct sorts out men from the boys

Ruaridh Nicoll flexes his muscles

WHAT they wanted was hard muscles plus "a face that speaks volumes". What they got was me.

At 10am yesterday at London's Riverside Studios, Hasbro, the toy manufacturer, was casting Action Man. The figurine was born 32 years ago — when England last won the World Cup — but still sells in the millions. Hasbro wants to



Toy firm Hasbro is looking for a real life Action Man

prolong his shelf life by finding a real man prepared to live out an Action Man life: scuba-diving, sky-diving and roller-blading his way around the world at promotional events.

Stamped Number 27, I wait among the hopefuls. One, Mark Griffin, is still fresh from roller-blading, a long run, and rowing at Sam. Another, Mike Rey-

naud, jet black hair swept back, tells me of the time he played Christopher Reeve's double in Superman.

Someone says the job pays a six-figure sum; I stub out my cigarette and begin talking the audition seriously. Jamie Beardsmore, a hunk of a fitness trainer, offers a few tips. "Action Man's got to have a killer instinct. After all he is still a soldier."

"But he has to be sensitive as well. Maybe he kills the men, and looks after their women and children." We strip off our shirts for the panel of four women and two men. The women look flushed; the men assure me that they are not.

The room fills with muscle soaked in testosterone; a group practices kick-boxing in the corner; a reporter from Radio 1 surveys the scene and licks her lips. I worry for Mark, the one who was up at Sam. Although he just missed joining England's world championship rowing team by one second, and has competed on Gladiators, he has merely the physique of a sportsman, not some mus-

cle monster on steroids. Worst of all, he is reading the Guardian.

Each hopeful is photographed topless, and then the fitness test begins. We leap around to the beat, sweat splashing the floor. "The set of the jaw isn't quite right," says one woman. "I couldn't go out with someone with a tighter arse than me," says another.

Hoping to use my charm, I wander up to one Judge, Catherine Derrine, and ask which one she fancies. "I prefer blonde," she says — then looks me in the eye and adds, "but not you."

Through lunch the tension rises. It Girl Tara Palmer-Tomkinson, another judge, tells me that I have the looks for Action Man, but I suspect her sincerity as she is carried off by a group of Atlases.

We are called back in. The numbers are read out. I am, I realise, not an Action Man at all. "Don't worry," says Mark who has breezed through to the last dozen and goes forward for a final choice in a month's time. "You made it to the last 50. Who else can say that?"

Drugs 'boosting property crime'

Alan Travis
Home Affairs Editor

DRUG-related crime, particularly heroin and crack cocaine, is at least as widespread in Britain as it is in the US, according to new Home Office research showing that more than six out of 10 suspects held in police stations test positive for illegal drugs.

The findings from the first research project of its kind in Europe suggest that nearly one third of all property crimes, such as shoplifting and burglary and worth as much as £2.5 billion a year, is "drug driven" to fund the illicit habits of 130,000 problem drug users.

The unexpected strength of this link surprised Home Office ministers who used the research results to underline the need to introduce their mandatory drug testing and treatment orders. The research also reported positive results from three pioneering voluntary schemes referring criminals to drug treatment programmes, and shows a clear unmet demand for help from one in five of

Drugs of alcohol

Percentage of sample testing positive for these drugs

	Cannabis	Heroin	Crack cocaine	Amphetamine	All four	Alcohol
Sunderland	35	10	1	5	45	55
Nottingham	35	32	27	5	75	75
UK Average	45	15	15	15	51	51

Source: Home Office

those arrested. Drug treatment workers welcomed the results but wondered whether the Government's commitment to spending £40 million on new testing and treatment programmes from later this year would be sufficient to meet the scale of the problem.

The Home Office director of research, Christopher Nuttall, said the urine testing research programme was the first of its kind outside the US and showed more clearly than ever before that the levels of drug misuse by offenders was remarkably high. It also demonstrated that those criminals dependent on heroin and/or crack cocaine were committing far more property crimes than other offenders. Although cannabis was the most common illegal drug

used by those tested (46 per cent), Mr Nuttall said it was not particularly implicated in the acquisition as those testing positive for cannabis alone were not heavily involved in property crime.

The research, involving tests and interviews with a sample of 639 suspects in police stations in Sunderland, Nottingham, Cambridge, London and Manchester, showed that those who had taken heroin and/or crack cocaine had the highest illegal incomes, ranging between £10,000 and £20,000 a year. This compared with incomes of about £4,000 a year from crime for the others. Three-quarters of this illegal income came from property crime and only about a quarter from drug dealing.

"By implication, the heroin/crack users' property crime would have fallen by almost a third if their illegal income had been the same as that of other arrestees. We can tentatively conclude that close to a third of property crime is drug driven," said Mr Nuttall.

The research showed that the scale of this drug-driven crime was enormous with some 130,000 "problem users" spending roughly £1.3 billion a year to fund their habits. The Home Office estimated they needed to steal about £2.5 billion worth of goods to raise around £850 million in cash.

There were regional variations, with only 8 per cent of suspects testing positive for alcohol in Manchester but many more with traces of cannabis, opiates and cocaine. This compared with Sunderland where 42 per cent of suspects were found with drink in their bloodstreams.

The research also showed that three "arrest refusal schemes" operating in south London, Derby and Brighton have had some success in reducing drug use.

Drug Testing Arrestees, Trevor Bennett, Home Office Research Findings 70.

Police chief faces dismissal

Lawrence Donegan

THE embattled chief constable of Grampian police seemed certain to lose his fight to cling to office last night after his police authority decided to invoke legislation allowing it to remove him on grounds of "inefficiency".

Grampian Police Board announced it intended to force Ian Oliver to retire early following the publication of a damning report into his force's conduct of an investigation into the death of Scott Simpson, a nine-year-old Aberdeen boy who was murdered by a convicted paedophile.

The Scottish Secretary, Donald Dewar, urged Dr Oliver to "pack his bags and go" after the inquiry highlighted a "corporate breakdown" within Grampian police and made a series of recommendations which amounted to a

'It is a magical mystery tour when you engage with Dr Oliver. He is a mercurial, strange man'

complete overhaul of the force.

Dr Oliver, who rejected the report's central criticisms and has resisted immense political and media pressure to stand down, has been given 10 days to make a case for retaining his job. He has been called to a meeting of the police board on May 1, where his dismissal is certain to be confirmed. A final decision would then be taken by Mr Dewar, and political sources confirmed last night he would have "no hesitation" in sack-

ing the chief constable.

Pet Chalmers, the authority's chairman, said Dr Oliver had given the board no option to force his early retirement. "We are conscious of the fact that the board needs to restore its confidence and rebuild after the litany of bungling and incompetence which this report contains," he said.

"Nothing surprises me about Dr Oliver. It is a magical mystery tour when you engage with Dr Oliver. He is a mercurial, strange man."

The board's decision to dismiss Dr Oliver came after it unanimously passed a motion of no confidence in him and one of its members, the former police officer Duncan Crawford, resigned in disgust over the chief constable's "intransigence".

Mr Crawford accused Dr Oliver of trying to "cut a financial deal" with the board which would entail him standing down voluntarily. "But when we pressed him he

indicated that he was not prepared to resign forthwith," he said after tendering his resignation.

Dr Oliver, aged 58, confirmed that he had been prepared to leave his post within two weeks but that his offer was refused by the board. "Therefore I am still the chief constable," he said.

Dr Oliver announced his intention to retire later this year after being photographed kissing a fellow member of his evangelical church.

Criticism of his regime at Grampian police came to head in November last year when 44-year-old Steven Leisk was jailed for life for the murder of Scott Simpson. It emerged afterwards that detectives investigating the case had overlooked vital evidence and failed to link Leisk, a convicted paedophile who lived in lodging overlooking a park when Scott was last seen, with the murder.

It's about helping players be mentally correct, says England manager



Glenn Hoddle with faith healer Eileen Drewery, who may be part of his World Cup backroom team. PHOTOGRAPH: HARRY PAGE

Hoddle puts World Cup faith in healer

John Duncan
Sports Correspondent

IN 1996 all England needed in their backroom was a bucket and a sponge. But in their battle to win the 1998 World Cup the England manager, Glenn Hoddle, is hoping to increase his backroom staff with the inclusion of Eileen Drewery, a faith healer he has been using for 24 years.

Ms Drewery has been consulted by the England team from the beginning of their successful World Cup qualifying campaign. Mr Hoddle said: "Three-quarters of the lads have seen her and now she's coming to the hotel rather than us going to her — it saves on expenses."

The wayward Paul Gascoigne saw Ms Drewery after he assaulted his wife, and Ian Wright, Paul Ince, Les Ferdinand and Robbie Fowler have all admitted to seeing her.

Now Mr Hoddle is toying with the idea of making her part of the biggest England backroom team ever for France 98. Travelling with the 22 England players for the five-week tournament will be a doctor, two physiotherapists, two masseurs, a kit manager, a video operator, a press spokesman and an administration assistant, as well as four coaches.

The Football Association emphasised last night that Mr Hoddle had not yet decided whether Ms Drewery would come to France. "As it stands at this moment she isn't coming," said a spokesman.

Mr Hoddle yesterday poured scorn on those who sneered at the inclusion of a faith healer. "She'll be with us up until France, and if

needed, depending on the situation, she might come out to us there as well. This is nothing new. It's been happening for 18 months.

"It's just that you only heard about it yesterday. People saw her before Rome, before the Chile game. It's about giving players the best opportunity to be mentally and physically correct to go to a World Cup."

"If some people want to look at the negative side, that's up to them. But I know it's a positive step, one we should be thankful. It's a part of the medical back-up."

The idea of some form of psychological assistance in sport is nothing new. Sports psychology is now accepted as an important part of training for top-level athletes. Sporting Bodymind, leading Harley Street sports psychologists,

were first asked to be involved in football in the early 1980s with Tottenham Hotspur where Glenn Hoddle was a player.

Simon Davies, of Sporting Bodymind, said: "Football is one of the less enlightened sports when it comes to using psychology and science. But we have several footballers who come to us. There are studies which have proved the physical benefits of a positive psychological approach such as better blood flow. If you replace the world faith with inner belief then the idea of using inner belief to aid physical recovery is not so strange."

The former England coach, Terry Venables, says in his autobiography that he once contemplated introducing a sports psychologist into the England set-up but feared negative press reaction.

Parents given advice on how long pupils should study

Blunk

Minister offers government support to school bullies

Defendant makes

Man judge calls witness to clarify 'contradiction'

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Parents given advice on how long pupils should study



A mother and daughter read together. The Government recommends between 20 minutes and 2½ hours' work per night depending on a child's age

PHOTOGRAPH: STEVE DOHERTY

Blunkett sets homework quotas

Vivek Chaudhary
Education Correspondent

SCHOOLCHILDREN should spend between 20 minutes to 2½ hours, depending on their age, doing homework every night, the Government announced yesterday as it issued the first guidelines to parents and schools on homework.

At the same time, the Education and Employment Secretary, David Blunkett, said that £200 million would be

spent on setting up 8,000 study support centres to help children do their homework and prepare for exams. The centres, to be funded with National Lottery money, will be designed to help children from difficult home circumstances.

Mr Blunkett said children aged between four and five should spend between 10 and 20 minutes doing homework — involving parents reading to their children — while those aged 16 should spend up to 2½ hours each night.

Mr Blunkett said research

showed homework helped children and that schools would be expected to include policies on homework in the home-school contracts they will be expected to draw up. The guidelines follow research showing that 43 per cent of 10-year-olds are not set any homework, and that more than half spend three hours or more watching television every night.

Mr Blunkett said: "If children want to do that, that's fine. But it isn't a lot to ask to do half an hour's homework as well."

Mr Blunkett was quick to point out that there was no compulsion on parents to ensure that their children stuck to the Government's guidelines. He said: "In the end, there's a limit to what any government can do."

"We can illustrate what the outcomes are of parents failing to be part of a partnership with their school, and we will show them how we will support them through the out-of-school study centres."

"The challenge is to help to make education part of the life blood of those communi-

ties where it has not been in the past."

The guidelines were designed to give teachers and parents "sensible and realistic benchmarks on the amount of homework different age groups at primary and secondary schools might be expected to do."

Mr Blunkett added: "Many parents are unsure, particularly at primary level, whether children should normally expect to be set homework at all. We have no power or intention to dictate in detail to parents what they do."

The out-of-school study centres will also operate like crammers, intensive study facilities which are commonly used by pupils at independent schools during their holidays. Mr Blunkett said the centres would be staffed during evenings and weekends by teachers and possibly by parents.

Teachers' unions gave a cautious welcome to the guidelines, claiming that they smacked of centralisation and were further proof of greater control of education by the government.

Peter Smith, general secre-

tary of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, said: "Nobody doubts the importance of homework, and the Government is right to underline the responsibilities parents have to make sure that their children do it."

"The danger is that it smacks of Big Brother, and is yet another initiative which suggests that the entire country's education system can be run from Whitehall."

Nigel De Gruchy, general secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters, Union of Women Teachers,

said: "Homework is an important part of the learning process. Every child should have some at some time. But how much and when must be a matter of professional judgment."

Doug McAvoy, general secretary of the National Union of Teachers, said the "prescriptive guidelines" did not recognise different school circumstances, but the study centres could help motivate children if properly funded.

All homework and no play, Q2 page 9

Minister offers government support to stop school bullies

John Carroll
Education Editor

DAVID Blunkett, the Education and Employment Secretary, yesterday pledged government support for a campaign to stop bullying in schools after hear-

ing alarming new evidence about how it could damage the victims throughout their lives.

"People who feel friendless and whose self-esteem is damaged need someone to stand by them, whether it is a teacher, a friend, or a volunteer. We all have to play a

part. It is all about listening and responding," he told a conference organised by the children's charity Kidscape. The charity published research showing nearly half of former victims confessed to low self-esteem and nearly three quarters said they had problems making friends in later life.

Women said they could not trust people and were afraid of new situations, easily victimised and afraid to succeed. Men said they were uncommunicative and shy. Both male and female former victims said they had become worse people than they were at school.

A survey of 1,000 former victims found 46 per cent had contemplated suicide because of the bullying, compared with 7 per cent of those who were not bullied. One in five at-

tempted suicide — some more than once — compared with 3 per cent of the non-bullied. Two-thirds of the victims told someone they were being bullied at school, but 29 per cent said that it made matters worse and 50 per cent said it made no difference. Only 8 per cent thought telling resulted in help.

Mr Blunkett said he understood the problem. As a child he made the mistake of confronting a school bully. "In the end I just got so fed up that I hit this guy very hard and I ended up in hospital with a damaged hand, and he was all right."

He read out a poem written by a 15-year-old boy at a Sheffield school attended by his son, Andrew, describing bullies as vermin with diseased minds.

Michele Elliott, director of

Kidscape, said: "Bullying is a pernicious terror that needs to be and can be stopped." Gaby Shenton, the charity's project leader, added: "Respondents wrote about knock-on effects on their work, their suicidal tendencies, their inability to befriend people of the same age and to trust others. It is in the bully, the victim, the teacher and every member of society's interest to prevent bullying and stop it when it arises."

The Government is updating an anti-bullying pack and video for schools. There will be £22 million from the school standards fund for local anti-bullying projects to help improve attendance and behaviour in class. A European Union conference in London next month will share successful strategies from across Europe.

The victims

When going to school ends in death or thoughts of suicide

THE Kidscape survey showed victims are commonly bullied for two to six years, but some adults said they were bullied right throughout their time at school.

Last year bullying was the most frequent reason for calls to ChildLine. More

than 14,000 children rang for help.

Earlier this month Bryan Frankish, 14, from Sheffield, died while trying to escape a gang of bullies by hitching a ride on the back of a friend's bicycle which smashed into a passing car.

Leah Bradford-Smith, aged 16, from West Sussex, won £100,000 damages from school authorities for four years of systematic abuse she said had made her suicidal.

Last September, Kelly Yeomans, aged 13, committed suicide at her home in Derby after prolonged bullying at school. Five boys who tormented her were later ordered to spend time at an attendance centre.

Earlier last year, Katherine Jane Morrison, aged 16, took her own life after being bullied by two teenage girls on Stornoway in the Outer Hebrides.

Famous people who have admitted to being bullied at school include the boxer Frank Bruno, the politician Lord Whitelaw, the camp comedian Julian Clary, the Channel 4 chief executive Michael Grade, and the actress Daryl Hannah. The former Labour leader, Neil Kinnock, said he was bullied because of his red hair.

The Prince of Wales is said to have been bullied at Gordonstoun public school, where fellow pupils used to boast after playing rugby that they had "kicked the future King of England".

Defendant makes light of current affair

Nory Carroll

IT'S a reaction that unites us all. The boss of a troubled company tours the office switching off lights before going home, muttering about cost cutting.

Or the householder's seamy self-reproach after coming downstairs for breakfast and finding lights left on overnight. On a bad morning the television or stereo might be broken, sucking more juice from the national grid and adding to the inevitable bill.

Diana judge calls witnesses to clarify 'contradictions'

Jon Henley in Paris

EIGHT months after the crash that killed Diana, Princess of Wales, the French magistrate leading the inquiry has summoned a group of key witnesses to a joint hearing in an attempt to clarify contradictions in their statements.

Lawyers said the meeting, known as a "general confrontation" and not uncommon in France, was scheduled for June 5 at the Palais de Justice in Paris. It would involve some dozen witnesses and a motorcade of cars, including the black Mercedes.

Trevor Rees-Jones, the bodyguard who was the sole survivor of the August 31 accident in the Pont de l'Alma underpass, is unlikely to at-

tempt, his Paris lawyer said. Mr Rees-Jones on Monday resigned from his job with Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed, whose son Dodi was also killed.

A justice official unconnected with the inquiry said joint hearings were "aimed at forcing the witnesses to confront the inconsistencies between their various stories and, hopefully, arrive at a more complete and accurate version of events."

Witnesses' accounts reportedly differ on what contact the photographers had with the hotel; whether the driver challenged photographers to race; how close photographers were to the car at the time of the crash; and whether a white Fiat Uno was involved.

Like taxes and death, every one must face the reckoning. Step forward Ian Tordoff, who was accused yesterday of trying to beat the system. He powered his home and business for six years by connecting his electricity supply to a lamppost, a court heard.

A cable from the street light ran through a fence, across a field, through a hut, a garage and into a fuse box at his home.

Tordoff's free supply, valued at £9,260, ended after Yorkshire Electricity workers investigated reports that

the street lights were faulty, the court heard. Yumas Valli, prosecuting, said the illegal connection powered outbuildings and workshops, four colour televisions, lighting and domestic appliances, including a dishwasher, washing machine, microwave, fridge freezer, two showers and two hi-fi stereo systems.

Mr Tordoff, aged 43, denies damaging property belonging to Yorkshire Electricity and dishonestly using electricity between March 21, 1991 and March 21, 1997.

When police went to his home in Stanley, near Wakefield, West Yorkshire, Tordoff claimed his electricity came from a generator, Mr Valli said. Challenged that the generator was not working, Tordoff claimed it was used over-

night to charge up batteries stored underneath the floorboards.

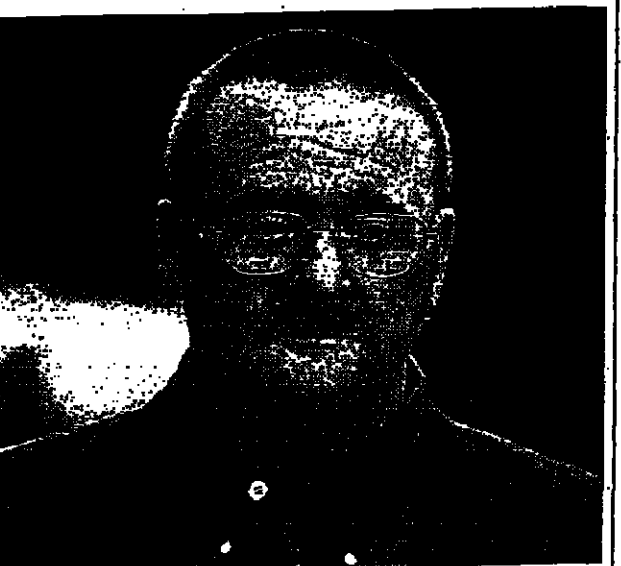
Mr Valli told a Leeds crown court jury there were no batteries found and no record of Yorkshire Electricity connecting a supply to the premises.

When asked by police how his premises were powered, Tordoff replied: "Well, I don't know."

Brian Harris, a Yorkshire Electricity engineer, said he returned nine months after the cable was disconnected to find it had been reconnected.

"It's quite dangerous — someone would have to have a certain degree of knowledge to carry it out. It is only 240 volts but it is a current that could kill."

The trial continues.



Ian Tordoff outside court yesterday PHOTOGRAPH: WILLIAM LACK

Knives found at suspects' home

KNIVES, a sword and an air gun were hidden in the home of two brothers suspected of being involved in the murder of black teenager Stephen Lawrence, the inquiry into his stabbing was told yesterday.

But the May 1993 dawn raid on the house where Neil and Jamie Accourt lived with their mother was two weeks after the killing, so it was unlikely to produce the murder weapon, the officer in charge of the search told the hearing.

Stephen, aged 18, was killed in a racially-motivated attack in Eltham, south London, in April 1993.

Detective Sergeant David Kirkpatrick told the inquiry at the Elephant and Castle, south London, that he did not know why the search was not ordered sooner.

He said he found Neil Accourt in bed at the house in Eltham. A knife was found behind the TV set in the room. Two more, and a jacket with a bloodstain, were found in another padlocked room.

There was a sword in a scabbard under the living room settee and two knives in a kitchen dishwasher. A shoulder holster for a gun was found in a china cupboard.

Police also found an air pistol and clothing, including a green shirt with knife cuts.

Sgt Kirkpatrick said he arrested Accourt and questioned him at a police station, but he refused to say anything.

Police having information that knives might have been hidden there, Sgt Kirkpatrick said he could not now be sure if the information had been passed to the search team, but it was unlikely to have been ignored if it had.

Cross-examined by Stephen Kamlish for the Lawrence family, Sgt Kirkpatrick was asked if he had tried to protect Accourt. He replied: "Certainly not. If Neil Accourt was responsible for that murder he should be locked up. I did everything I could to get him convicted."

The inquiry has been told that 39 pieces of information came from members of the public, throwing suspicion on the brothers and three other white youths within days of the killing, but no arrests were made for a further two weeks.

Police were told that the Accourts admired the Kray brothers and boasted that no one could join their gang without stabbing someone first.

Neil Accourt, 22, Gary Dobson, 22, and Luke Knight, 20, were cleared at the Old Bailey in 1996 of killing Stephen. The cases of Jamie Accourt and David Norris, both 21, never came to trial.

Today is the fifth anniversary of Stephen's murder, and the hearing was adjourned until tomorrow.

His family and friends will hold a vigil during the evening at the spot in Well Hall Road, Eltham, where he was killed.

Cook's 'third way' for human rights

Ian Black
Diplomatic Editor

BETWEEN "the row and the kow-tow" there is a "third way" of promoting global human rights in a way that makes a real difference, Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, claimed yesterday.

Unveiling the Government's first report on human rights, a key element of what he has called the ethical dimension of Labour's foreign policy, Mr Cook insisted "practical partnerships can be built to make a change for the better."

Flanked by Clare Short, the International Development Secretary, Mr Cook said dialogue with China and co-operation with Indonesia and the Philippines were examples of real practical progress.

"We will be those who say we should condemn abuse more loudly and pick fights rather than promote partnership," he said. "We are not afraid to condemn when working together is not an option, but we want to make a change, not just a point."

The 56-page report, welcomed by Amnesty International and other charities and development groups, acknowledges dilemmas in placing human rights at the centre of foreign policy. But it also highlights advances including the establishment of the Human Rights Project Fund of £5 million and areas where Britain is taking the lead to end child labour.

David Bull, director of Amnesty International UK, said: "This is a good day for human rights. We welcome the Government's recognition in the 50th anniversary year of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that human rights lie at the heart of foreign policy."

But Amnesty also called on the Government to "be prepared to take a lead in human rights issues in the European Union and in the wider international community."

Michael Howard, the shadow foreign secretary, denounced Mr Cook's policy as a sham. "We too refused to sell defence equipment that was likely to be used to suppress human rights," he said.

He claimed that the uncertainty caused by government policy had led to delays in granting export licences for innocuous equipment and that orders had been lost.

But Mr Cook said: "One of the points I found deeply depressing about the criticism when we started out on this project were the complaints that if you raise concerns about human rights you will damage relations with all countries."

"We resisted that polarisation of foreign relations either as a row or a kow-tow. We have found a third way and have been able to develop economic cooperation, without being prevented from speaking honestly."

Leader comment, page 9; Analysis, page 11

Former French ministers close ranks before first American-style parliamentary hearing into genocide

Rwanda policy defended

Paul Webster in Paris

TWO Gaullist former prime ministers yesterday led a defence of France's interventionist policy during the Rwanda genocide when they were questioned by a parliamentary commission which has broken new ground in French politics.

The commission, headed by a Socialist former minister, Paul Quilès, is the first attempt to copy public hearings on key issues in the United States Congress. It was clear from the first openly recorded evidence, however, that government and opposition were anxious to cover over one of the most dubious operations of the Mitterrand presidency.

Edouard Balladur, the prime minister at the height of the Rwandan tribal massacres by Hutus, and his foreign minister at the time, Alain Juppé, both refused to criticise French interventionist policy by a crisis team in the president's office. Two other right-wing former ministers, François Léonard (defence) and Michel Rousset (African co-operation) also rejected media accusations that French policy had encouraged Hutu vengeance against the Tutsi traditional rulers during 1994.

Today, moves to protect the reputation of the late Socialist president will be reinforced when his son, Jean-Christophe Mitterrand, his personal representative in Africa, will give evidence. On

May 5, the foreign minister, Hubert Vedrine, Mitterrand's chief of staff during the Rwanda crisis, will add his testimony in favour of the former president.

Mr Balladur, prime minister

which hundreds of thousands of people died in tribal executions, was the first of several French political setbacks in the African Great Lakes region, but Mr Balladur said that his country should be

'France never ceased to put pressure on Habyarimana to seek a power-sharing arrangement'

ter between 1993 and 1995, and, Mr Juppé, his immediate successor, insisted on being heard before the commission had drawn up a timetable to question about 50 witnesses, including several secret service and military people.

The Rwanda affair, in proud that it was the only country to intervene to "limit the horror", a reference to a Foreign Legion peacekeeping force sent under a United Nations mandate.

from 1995 to 1997, told the commission he was proud of the example given by France in the face of international indifference.

The move to protect François Mitterrand, who had overall control of the entire Rwanda operation, is not expected to be dented by the appearance tomorrow of Jean-Christophe, a former journalist given the task of keeping in contact with French-speaking heads of state protected by France.

Mr Quilès, the commission chairman, is one of the most loyal defenders of the Mitterrand legacy, but the strongest testimony in the late president's favour is expected from Mr Vedrine. Yesterday, he anticipated his hearing on May 5 by denying that the Ellys

blindly supported the repressive Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana, whose assassination precipitated the genocide.

"France never ceased to put pressure on him to accept an evolution of his regime, notably to seek a power-sharing arrangement with the domestic opposition," Mr Vedrine said.

Reporting on the Rwanda affair has obscured a parliamentary debate on the European single currency.

The prime minister, Lionel Jospin, appealed to the national assembly yesterday to support the euro before a vote due today, when Communists and Greens could join with rightwing opponents of the currency, which is due to come into force next January.

News in brief

Americans defeated in Cuba vote at UN

THE United Nations Human Rights Commission yesterday narrowly voted down a resolution by the United States to keep Cuba under special scrutiny for another year. Nineteen countries voted against the resolution, 16 backed it and 18 abstained. A similar resolution has been approved by the commission every year since 1991.

"This is the victory of reason," a Cuban delegation member, Alfonso Martínez, said. The result came after a number of countries which abstained last year — including Russia, Pakistan and several African states — rejected the resolution. If passed, the resolution would have extended by one year the mandate of a special investigator to the commission, Carl Johan Groth, whose report last month lamented continuing human rights abuses. — AP, Geneva.

Amnesty spotlight on Romania

AMNESTY International criticised Romania yesterday for failing to keep promises it made to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg to improve its human rights record.

A year ago the council's parliamentary assembly ended the formal monitoring of Romania's compliance with its commitments to human rights and gave Bucharest 12 months to address outstanding concerns. Amnesty said the reports it was receiving suggested it was too early to relax scrutiny. — Reuters, London.

Timorese flee to embassy

A WOMAN and three men from the troubled territory of East Timor have sought asylum in the British embassy in Jakarta, embassy officials said yesterday. In the past six months several groups of East Timorese have turned to European embassies to escape what they say is persecution by the Indonesian authorities.

The embassy said it had forwarded the group's request to be taken to Portugal, the colonial power in East Timor until 1975, to Indonesian officials. — AP, Jakarta.

Seoul denies planting bug

SOUTH KOREA denied yesterday that it had planted a secret listening device in a conference room in Beijing where its officials were holding talks with North Korea last week.

Blaming Seoul for the breakdown of the talks, Pyongyang said South Korea's state-run KBS TV had planted the bugging device with government permission. The South's unification ministry admitted finding the microphone hidden in a flower bouquet but said it removed the device more than an hour before the talks. It said there had been no need to bug the talks because both sides were already making sound recordings. — AP, Seoul.

MP jailed for BBC interview

BURMA'S military government has sentenced a leading member of the country's democracy movement to 25 years in prison for giving an interview to BBC radio, an exiled opposition group said yesterday. A government spokesman confirmed the sentence.

The All Burma Students' Democratic Front said San San was arrested in October with two other National League for Democracy MPs and five party members after they tried to meet the party leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. The government insisted on her ending her political activities, and she was charged when she did an interview with the BBC. — AP, Bangkok.

Vanunu 'will show no remorse'

THE Israeli nuclear spy Mordechai Vanunu will not express remorse at his first parole hearing this week, his American adoptive parents said after visiting him yesterday.

Having served two-thirds of his 18-year term for treason, Vanunu is due to appear before a parole board today at Shikma prison in the southern coastal town of Ashkelon.

"He is not hopeful about the results of the parole board hearing tomorrow. He is very agitated and ill-at-ease about it," said his father, Nick Eloff, a peace activist from Minnesota.

A former nuclear technician, Vanunu was convicted of treason for passing photographs of Israel's secret nuclear weapons plant to the Sunday Times in 1986. He was held in solitary confinement until last month. — AP, Ashkelon.

PM steps into Auschwitz row

POLAND'S prime minister said yesterday that priests and community leaders living near the former Nazi death camp at Auschwitz would help to decide the fate of a large cross that has offended Jewish groups.

The 26ft cross commemorates Poles killed at the camp in 1941 and also marks the site of a mass held by the Polish-born Pope in 1978. But international Jewish groups say it damages the memory of more than one million Jews killed in the camp. — AP, Warsaw.

Hottest relics of the cold war

THE highly enriched uranium from Georgia which is bound for Dounreay in Scotland is from one of many sources in the former Soviet Union of weapons grade material.

Although the Georgian source's material, at 5kg, is not enough to make a weapon requires 15kg, there are plenty of other potential sources in the region.

The United States fears that there is enough material on the black market for an enterprising terrorist or dictator to buy a nuclear bomb. By ordering material off the shelf in the former Soviet Union, countries such as Iraq, Syria, Libya, Iran and North Korea could dispense with the laborious business of refining their own material.

The problem for the Western powers is that no proper inventory exists of the former Soviet arsenal of weapons, or of similar material distributed to research institutions to power small reactors.

Nearly all the Georgian material has not been irradiated in a reactor, making it ideal for making weapons. The problem for the US is that there are no longer any legitimate users of large quantities of such material — or if there are, they should already have enough stockpiled at home.

The fact that the Russian, French, and US governments have all refused to accept the Georgian material shows just how difficult an issue it is. There are several different problems that nuclear proliferation poses. In Russia, itself, there are large graveyards of nuclear submarines, many of which still have nuclear fuel rods in storage. These cannot be used directly but re-pro-

cessing the fuel, as is done at Sellafield in Cumbria or Dounreay, provides enough plutonium to make a bomb.

Russia has its own reprocessing works and several "closed" cities where bombs were manufactured. Warheads have to be constantly dismantled and rebuilt because radioactive materials are degrading all the while.

Even so, present weapons-grade material production sites were located in closed cities near Chelyabinsk, Tomsk, Yakaterinburg and Krasnoyarsk. In May 1993 Russia's nuclear arsenal stood at 32,000 warheads, and there was 177 tonnes of weapons-grade plutonium.

There have been rumours of unpaid or disenchanted nuclear weapons workers selling off some of the stock. Only a few of the 8,000 workers with detailed knowledge would be needed to set up a smuggling ring.

There are a few examples on record from the former Eastern bloc.

In August 1994 Hungarian police arrested two men who had been trying to sell 2kg of uranium in a car park. Their price was modest — just \$30,000. However, the uranium was not of fission quality, which is what the more discerning buyer — or state-sponsored buyer — needs. It was the fourth seizure in Hungary in four years.

Then in March last year, Italy's leading anti-Mafia prosecutor, Pier Luigi Vigna, held a summit of police chiefs to discuss how to tackle a crime wave that followed the arrival of more than 10,000 Albanian refugees. There had been reports that radioactive material had been smuggled from Albania for sale.

Municipal policemen dressed as old-style convicts demonstrate in Paris yesterday against a new bill by the interior minister, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, which police unions say will disarm the municipal police and end night patrols

PHOTOGRAPH: THOMAS COEX



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Zurich	S.F.	218	382	703
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Code of practice to target secrecy by Eurocrats

Stephen Bates in Brussels

THE bureaucrats of Brussels, legendary for their lack of accountability, will soon face a Code of Good Administrative Behaviour after complaints about secrecy.

The move, being discussed with staff unions, follows criticisms by the European Ombudsman, whose 300-page annual report into maladministration in the European Union's institutions was published yesterday.

The ombudsman, Jacob Soderman was formerly Finland's ombudsman, where he had powers to prosecute officials. Yesterday he settled for a code of conduct as the best way to achieve improvement in the quality of administration across Europe.

He told MEPs at the European Parliament "I really hope we will have the first code adopted on community level this year... it is an important sign of a commitment to create a more service-minded administrative culture."

The ombudsman has powers to investigate complaints from any citizen of the EU about the way its institutions, ranging from the European Commission to the Court of Justice, are run. So far France has produced the most criticisms, followed by Germany, Spain and Britain.

In the three years since his office was set up, the number of complaints has risen from 239 in 1995 to 348 so far this year. More than 200 formal inquiries were launched last year, 21 resulting in criticisms of the institutions.

The cases have ranged from complaints about European Commission secrecy in recruiting staff, maladministration in setting up tendering procedures for the new parliament building in Brussels, and the infringement of an official's rights of free expression.

In the case of the talk-

ative official, the ombudsman told the commission that a staff member's obligation to discretion was overridden by his guarantee of freedom of expression under the European convention on human rights. Under the proposed code, staff will be advised "not to undermine the dignity of their function" in speaking to journalists.

It is on access to documents that the ombudsman has made most progress. In a case brought by British journalist Tony Bunyan, of the human rights magazine Statewatch, Mr Soderman overruled the Council of Ministers' refusal to release papers.

The council's officials advised Mr Bunyan that he

"The move signifies a commitment to create a more service-minded EU culture"

could appeal to the ombudsman over their decision and then told the ombudsman that he had no right to intervene. The council has provided some documents but withholds others.

Mr Bunyan said yesterday: "The council says now that it has changed its procedure but unless someone had pushed at the door first they would not have done so. Now they are constructing new doors."

The proposed 15-page code will cover areas such as recruitment procedures, simplifying administration, public accountability and bureaucracy.

A commission spokeswoman said: "We are in discussion over how staff should show good behaviour to citizens and how they should respond to requests for information. We are taking the ombudsman's recommendations positively into account."

مكتبة الامم

Comment

Diary

Matthew Norman

ON this grief-filled day, it is my duty to mark the Murdoch separation with a poignant reminder of what Anna will be missing. I hope Rupert will forgive a *souper* of the intrusiveness he so deplors in his own newspapers, as we retell a story told in a magazine a decade ago — in admiration of Mrs M's gift for leavening business dinners. The Murdochs were at a chic New York dinner party when their host referred to a colleague so business-fixated and emotionally stunted that he even made love to his wife with arms straight down by his side. When ill-suppressed giggles were heard on Anna's side of the table, Rupert, perhaps unwisely, insisted she share the joke with other guests. "But Rupert, darling," she said sweetly, "don't you realise that's the way you always do it?" Happy days.

TENNIS umpire trains for Wimbledon by moonlighting on the London underground. "Would the idiot on the platform who took pictures of the train as it pulled into the station not do it again," went a terse announcement on a Hammersmith and City line train last week. "It's very distracting to the driver. No flash photography on the tube."

THE latest betting on Labour's campaign to find a London Mayor oral candidate to beat Ken Livingstone. Diary pundit Steptoe has reformed the book after a flood of money for the late Arthur Askey, now outright favourite at 11-4. Also heavily supported, after his tough stance on crime, is Guffy Wegg-Prosser. Only 9-2 co-second favourite of four with Frank Dobson, Chris Smith, and Lene, the lead singer of Aqua. Helen Brinton is an easy-to-back 8-1, with the Galloping Gourmet and Glenda Jackson at 16-1 and Prince Edward, Harriet Harman and Tinky Winky, while reports that he is Mr Tony's preferred runner bring Tony Banks in from 500-1 to a more realistic 300-1.

MOST intriguing event, noted in Surrey on Monday, has been relayed to the Diary. Michael Cole was seen entering the gracious Burley Park residence of Max Clifford with a TV crew. Michael, who recently left his post as Mohammed Al-Fayed's Letter-writer-in-chief after abruptly, interviewed Maxy for a BBC documentary on the Royal Family. What is faintly odd is that the camera crew were left alone, and Michael did not emerge until a couple of hours later. What these two masters of PR discussed for so long, who can say? But perhaps, in the fullness of time, we may find out.

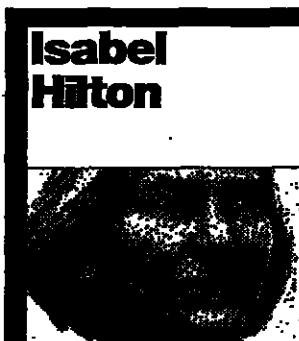
FROM the House of Lords comes timely reassurance on a military matter. Asked by Lord Jenkins of Putney (not Roy) about the possible use of nuclear weapons in the Gulf, defence minister Lord Gilbert was unequivocal. Well, very nearly. "Your Lordships will be relieved to know that Her Majesty's Government are not engaged in planning any nuclear wars," he replied, "at this time."

RESIDENTS of Worthing borough council's Central ward have received their spring newsletter from the Liberal Democrats. All is going well, judging by an article entitled "Liberal Democrats improve quality of life", but the best news is on the polling front. "Central ward's Bobby on the Beat," the newsletter reveals, "is PC Spinks. Contact him on 231821." Helms out! PC Spinks!

WHO GETS CUSTODY OF THE UNIVERSE? NEWS INTERNATIONAL



It will never again be possible in Europe to run the old kind of politics



Isabel Hilton

THE EURO, we are told this week, could soon rival the dollar as the world's reserve currency of choice — and, incidentally, could become the favourite currency of organised crime. What greater badge of success could it hope for? Given the stage we have reached in Economic and Monetary Union — that it's almost upon us regardless of any lingering anxieties — we have to hope that the predictions are right. The stability of the Euro, though, and its potential as a reserve currency, will depend to a great extent on whether the remarkable convergence achieved by the 11 candidate members is sustainable. And much of the doubt lies in the politics as well as the economics.

Monetary union was once thought of as a stage on the road to political union. Some still think of it that way, but the sceptics are still not entirely convinced. Whilst acknowledging the huge effort the Italians had made to meet the convergence criteria, the sceptics wondered aloud whether Ciampi would be able to go on coaxing budgetary rigour out of the Italian parliament. Prodi's coalition requires the support of Rifondazione, the reformed Communist party, who have brought the government down last autumn over Ciampi's last round of privatisations.

Rifondazione is in a bind: it doesn't want to be the party that wrecked Italy's chance of joining EMU because, unlike in Britain, there is no electoral mileage in Italy to being anti-Euro. But the party is

ideologically opposed to the programme that is necessary to achieve and sustain convergence. The result is a constant negotiation between Ciampi/Prodi and Rifondazione. One fruit of last autumn's crisis was a commitment to a 35-hour working week that nobody bar Rifondazione wants or believes will be helpful to Italy's restructuring.

Hence Ciampi's early presentation of the budget, the formal decision on EMU membership will be taken at the EU summit in Cardiff in May. Too much trouble from Rifondazione and Ciampi can still (just) hold out the threat that doubts could still arise over Italy's membership. A similar situation exists in France, except that there the leftist opponents of the convergence measures are inside the government. Three Communist ministers and the powerful deputy prime minister, Martine Aubry, have the finance minister Dominique Strauss-Kahn surrounded. He wants to continue with a programme of radical cuts in the social security budget and reduction of employment costs, they are champions of the Socialist promise of a 35-hour working week in France.

YESTERDAY the prime minister Lionel Jospin told Le Monde that he did not anticipate that sceptics within the government would rock the boat at this stage. "There will not be a drama over the Euro," he observed. "I don't expect members of the majority to

say anything other than what they believe. But at the same time, the Euro is going to happen and they all know it." In other words, stand to one side, because the juggernaut is rolling.

In both countries the commitment to EMU is a handy tool for forcing through reforms that the internal opposition could otherwise have blocked. In neither country is the process complete, but in theory at least, it will not be possible for any member of EMU ever again to run the kind of politics Italy had in the 80s, when politicians financed patronage by creating debt.

Once all costs are counted in Euros, price differences, tax differences and variations in employment costs between countries will be exposed and will be under pressure to converge. EMU may bring a kind of de facto political convergence as the political leaders of the 11 member states try to achieve their shared goals of employment and growth within the shared constraints of monetary union. If they fail, they will be tempted to blame monetary union without the electorate having the means to do anything about it. The views of the voters in the prospective member states have not been greatly heeded in the creation of the single currency. How long will member states be able to resist the logic of the need to provide a convincing political counterweight for EMU?

Jonathan Freedland is away

Why one journalist is giving evidence against alleged war criminals in Bosnia

I must testify

Ed Vulliamy

I HAVE an appointment tomorrow to accept the scoured honour of testifying before the war crimes tribunal. I did this two years ago for the successful prosecution of Bosnian Serb Dusan Tadic, ethnic cleanser and part-time camp guard at and around the Srebrenica camp. This time it's a Croat in the dock: Tihomir Blaskovic, accused of ordering the savage murder of Muslims in Central Bosnia.

Much has happened in the Hague since the Tadic trial of 1996. For all Nato's timidity, the number in custody has risen from one to 28 — not enough, but a healthy increase. The hideous violence of Bosnia always lurks behind the shoulder of anyone who witnessed it, but is best kept out of sight during everyday life. The act of testifying, however, requires one to place that savagery right before one's eyes again, vividly enough to meet the strictest standards of a court, and the

likelihood of cross-examination. I was driving along a lonely road in New Mexico recently when the radio announced the execution of Simo Drijaca and the arrest of "another man at Prijedor hospital".

I vividly remembered Drijaca bundling us out of Camp Omarska on the putrid day that ITN and I stumbled into that infernal place — and I didn't need the radio to tell me who "another man" was. That would be Milan Kovacevic, who, in 1996, confessed his drunken guilt to me and Roger Cohen of the New York Times, his eyes burning with brandy and remorse.

There have been arrests within the past few days that keep the spectre of Omarska before one's eyes: Miroslav Kovacka and Zoran Radakovic were seized by the SAS — shift commanders at the camp, the latter accused of raping female prisoners. Then, at the end of last week, came the surrender of Zoran Zigic, whose name I first heard back in 1992, from terrified prisoners. The man whose

appearance at the Hague has become a litmus test for the tribunal's credibility is Serb leader Radovan Karadzic. Sources among the investigators say that the fugitive is holed up in a monastery near his old bastion of Pale, a place wherein even the SAS

I do not want to be neutral between the woman raped and the beast who rapes

would be reluctant to snatch him. Nevertheless, one can hear the diplomats, and Karadzic himself, preparing for the day he surrenders in order to survive. The atmosphere at the Hague has changed too. A Bosnian government diplomat, Judge Vasvija Vidovic, saw the red light of a sniper's laser sight on her coat one night — her bodyguard pushed her out of the way just in time for the shot to fire wide. There are reports of intimidation of witnesses: their hotels are

crawling with Croat secret servicemen, and investigators report "visits" to witnesses' rooms at night.

What has not changed, however, is the curious reaction of my own profession to the proceedings. In 1996 I was the first journalist to testify. To the best of my knowledge only Dan Damon, formerly of Sky News, has also come forward. Some of the colleagues I most admire have counselled strongly against testifying.

But I start from a legal bottom line. If I see someone murdered, I expect to be called as witness. If the crime is a rape, or if the victim is a child or defenceless elderly person, then I testify all the more readily and willingly. Amplify that logic a million-fold, and you have a reason to go to the Hague over what we saw in Bosnia.

Sometimes, my colleagues' objections spawn from contempt for the tribunal's bureaucracy, petulance or arrogance — or the fact that it is too little, too late.

Sometimes, however, the objection is to do with "ob-

jectivity" and "neutrality", and this is a very different argument. There are times in history when neutrality is not neutral at all, but complicity in the crime — as any good Swiss gold banker from the 1940s will tell you. I do not want to be neutral between the camp guard and inmate; the woman raped seven times a night every night, and the beast who rapes her.

That was the cowardly and callous neutrality adopted by the UN itself in Bosnia, to such disastrous and bloody effect. As the reporter Tom Gjetten said: "The UN is uncomfortable with moral clarity, especially when it impedes its work." But the UN also set up the Hague tribunal. It was no doubt as a sop to avoid doing something when there was still something to achieve. But the Hague remains the only institution still trying to reckon with the heinousness of violence in Bosnia — and to judge it.

That is the only reckoning left to the victims of the war, and thus it is, ultimately, a condition of peace.

Give mothers the money

Polly Toynbee



WHAT is to be done about the catastrophic Child Support Agency? If you ask those struggling with its reform, they all groan. There is no answer. Whichever way they turn, it's a calamity. The green paper has been rewritten time and again in search of the impossible — a simple, fair system the public will support, leading to compliance by all parents. Not a chance.

Only 13 per cent of cases end in the CSA collecting a full sum from fathers. (The rest can't or won't pay, some pay privately.) But nowhere in the world is there a system that really works. Everywhere it causes a visceral sense of injustice. Yes, everyone agrees children are for life and parents should support them come what may. But there all agreement ends and passion begins. "She's got a rich partner," "She left me," "She doesn't spend it on the children," "I don't get enough access," "My new family is suffering," "My new wife has to work to support my ex sitting on her backside." What ever.

Can't pay, damned if they will pay, fathers seeth with passions the state delves into its peril. It's not just that there are too many cases — virtually every couple regards themselves angrily as a hard case. They all want their day in court (how the solicitors are pushing for it too) to make their story known, even if a day in court costs a fortune and does no good whatever. Consider the divorce of friends — both burn with fury, each has a painful story to tell. What official formula devised by Solomon himself, could satisfy all, or any of them?

So can this green paper produce a magic solution? No. The word is caution and, frankly, gloom. "Leaky" purporting to reveal a glittering new easy formula are, alas, miles off the mark. There is no answer, nor anything like one. Briefers advise not to expect too much — a matter of sipping one set of problems for another, but maybe a bit better.

Well, it could hardly be worse. As described in the Guardian yesterday, the present formula is four pages of close-typed algebra entirely incomprehensible to any father wanting to know what he should pay. Ninety per cent of CSA officials' time is taken trying to calculate it. Worse still, on average, each case is reviewed four times a year, with one partner angrily demanding a recalculation.

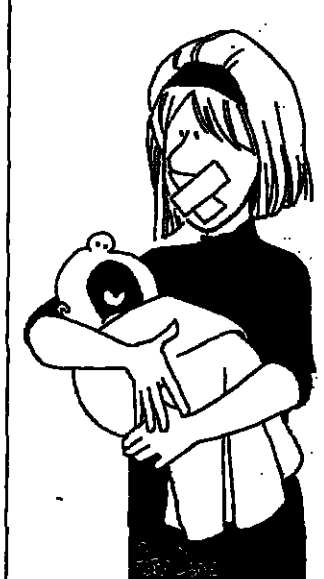
Simpler it could be, but simpler means less fair. One idea floated is taking 15 per cent of net income from the father for a first child, 5 per cent for others, up to 25 per cent maximum. But no, it couldn't be as simple as that. What of fathers with two previous families? Anyway, how deep should you cut into the income of a low-paid family to pay for a man's first children? How do you balance the pain? What if his wife is wealthy, what if... so many special circumstances arise that no formula will dare be so ruthlessly simple. What has caused despair is the 70 per cent of mothers now refusing to comply with an agency that was set up to help them become independent, get a job, get a life. But they makes the poll tax revolt pale into insignificance.

IN THEORY, mothers who refuse to reveal their child's father's whereabouts can lose 40 per cent of their income support. In practice, they opt for a clause that says if they have "good cause" not to reveal the father's name, they can opt out. Last year the number claiming "good cause" rose 15 per cent to nearly three quarters of all women.

Why? Anti-CSA fathers' groups have been running a clever campaign, brazenly

called "Colluding to Defraud the State". They explain how the threat of violence is almost always accepted as a reason to abandon a case. (Over-burdened CSA officers are eager to drop cases, counting them "cleared" on the slightest credible pretext.) Fathers' groups urge men to strike an agreement with their ex-partner to cheat the system and leave them both better off. If she's living on income support, as most single mothers do, then she'll never see a penny of whatever the CSA extracts from him. There's nothing in it for her, except revenge. But if he makes a threat of violence and gets her to withdraw from the CSA they can both do better. He pays her secretly a far smaller sum than the CSA was demanding. She receives it illegally on top of her income support and they're both quids in. This fraud means only 20 per cent of the 1,000,000 mothers on income support now receive a penny in maintenance (officially).

THE only answer is to allow them to keep a chunk of any money the CSA collects. They are desperately poor and they need it. Fathers would see their money going to their children, not to the Treasury. In the long run, mothers would do better not to cheat, living in fear of discovery, with no recourse if the father only pays erratically. But single mothers living in such poverty can't afford to take a long-term view. A small sum in the hand looks better than a larger sum the CSA may say it can extract, but probably won't give them, abysmal record so far. In any case, the CSA will keep it all until she takes a job, and that may take time. So it's safer to agree to the fraud and avoid the inevitable rows (and maybe real threats) if she sets



Seventy per cent won't comply with an agency that was set up to help them

the CSA on him. The Treasury has been strongly resisting letting single mothers keep any maintenance on top of income support. It's expensive — letting them keep £10 a week would cost the Treasury £100 million in putative lost income. However, in the face of this mass mothers' rebellion, it is the only sensible answer.

Meanwhile, the fathers are grinding their teeth to fight against any move to take a flat percentage off their incomes and remove some of their exemptions. Currently they can deduct their mortgages (so they take out huge ones). They deduct travel to work costs (drive there in a Porsche). They can deduct for second families, pension contributions and other items. All these exemptions have made it easier to bamboozle over-worked officials. But if it's simplified, fathers threaten more noisy demos and blistering MPs post bags.

Some problems have no answers. The CSA is one of them. It could do better, but it will never do well. It could screw more won't-pay men. It could catch more cheating women. But for most poor mothers maintenance will never change their fortunes. The money just isn't there: an ordinary family now needs one and a half incomes to get by, so one man's average pay will never support two families.

Standards at home
Parents can raise them

Letters to the Editor

Ulster

Eric Gill

With knobs

Mark Steel

The Guardian

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Standards at home

Parents can raise them

THE EDUCATION revolution rolls on. After new literacy and numeracy strategies, ministers issued new homework guidelines yesterday for schools and parents. The proposals cover all children in compulsory education from four-year-olds to pupils aged 16. They will be easy to mock. Homework for four-year-olds? Are we becoming as obsessive as the Japanese over educational standards? From the Right there will be charges of Labour indulging in yet another act of undue Nanny State interference while on the Left, political troglodytes will declare there is nothing wrong with British education. A reminder, then, of why Labour is right to be so concerned about standards.

In the first round of national tests three years ago, over half the country's children failed to achieve the expected level in English and mathematics at the age of 11. To their credit, all major political parties are agreed that there has to be more focus on literacy and numeracy in primary schools: so are most secondary school headteachers, who at their annual conferences have been regularly complaining about the poor skills of new pupils. Standards have started to rise. Just over 60 per cent of 11-year-olds achieved the expected levels in the second round of tests but that still leaves primary schools well below Labour's end-of-Parliament target — 80 per cent for literacy and 75 per cent for numeracy. By the end of a second parliament, it is aiming for 95 per cent reaching the expected levels.

Yesterday ministers set out their next building block more systematic homework. They are not aping the Japanese. Four-year-olds will not be set rigorous AR routines but parents will be encouraged to read with their children in the first three years of school for 10 to 20 minutes at night. Most parents are unsure of how much homework their children should be doing. Now they know. By the final year of primary school, pupils should have 30 minutes of homework plus 20 minutes of reading. The guidelines are based on extensive surveys and special studies carried out by school inspectors. Currently over 40 per cent of primary pupils in their final year do not have any regular homework. Many of these children are in disadvantaged areas only further widening already unacceptable educational inequalities. Now the Government is introducing various support schemes for such families — summer schools, homework clubs, and joint pupil/parent literacy schemes — for parents with poor reading or writing skills.

Of course there will be some protests that this is pushing pupils too far. David Blunkett was rightly robust in dismissing such doubts, noting that more than half of all 10-year-olds were watching three hours of television every night. "It isn't a lot to ask to do half-an-hour's homework as well." He pointed to Tower Hamlets, one of the most deprived boroughs in Britain, where a new homework strategy along with a homework club has raised reading standards by 30 per cent over two years.

Ministers deserve praise for their determination and focus but they must be careful about becoming too prescriptive. Their emphasis yesterday on the voluntary nature of the latest guidelines suggests they are becoming alert to the danger. They should look again, then, at their extremely

detailed literacy and numeracy strategies due to be launched this September and next year. Although there have been trials, no school has run the daily literacy hour with the 45-minute numeracy focus, yet all primary schools are expected to be following the programme within 18 months. It is too detailed and leaves too little discretion to teachers. Their professionalism has to be recognised. Ministers were right to set ambitious goals but they are only going to be achieved if they have the full commitment and support of the teaching profession.

An ethical report

But is the volume too loud?

THERE ARE lots of photographs of children in the new annual report on human rights issued by the Foreign Office and the Department for International Development. That is as it should be. Clare Short says it is the main theme of the report: it is certainly one of them. Britain is active in tackling the problems of children in armed conflict, street children, child labour, and their sexual exploitation. It has chaired a new UN resolution on the "rights of the child."

There is a photograph too of Tony Blair with Kofi Annan: again, it sends the right message. The UN needs explicit pledges of the kind made here. The report sets an ethical marker in this and other fields against which British performance can be measured. That is an important gain and one for which Mr Cook should be congratulated, not mocked by cynical Tories.

But there is also a photograph — just one — of our foreign secretary with the head of state of another country. It is ... President Suharto! What sort of message is that

supposed to send? An ageing dictator who hangs on to power for the seventh time, backed by a brutal army and cynically putting down the democratic opposition, who allows his cronies and offspring to lead the economy into even worse trouble while more millions sink below the poverty line?

One picture does not make a policy, but this one illustrates usefully some of the difficulties of being ethical which are neither concealed by the FO's bland presentation nor helped by a degree of over-sell. It might have been wiser just to say that it is early days for any significant results. Instead Mr Cook has gone out on a limb in citing Indonesia as a good example of his new policy. He gives even more prominence to China, where all sorts of developments are lumped together to show that "the approach works". Is Britain solely or even partly responsible for the release of Wang Dan, or for the UN Human Rights Commissioner's proposed visit?

There is nothing wrong with the argument that, except in the most extreme cases, it makes sense to urge human rights issues through dialogue rather than denunciation. Whether this really amounts to the discovery of a "third way" between "row and low-key" remains to be seen. We agree entirely that megaphone diplomacy is not often effective. But might not the Foreign Office be blowing its own trumpet just a tiny bit too soon?

Civic awareness

We need to bring out the votes

YESTERDAY John Prescott and his colleagues appealed to the press, radio and TV to do their civic duty and help make 21 million English voters aware that 4,174

seats in 166 councils are at stake in the local elections on May 7 — the lion's share of them Labour held. They also revealed that in Croydon, which the Tories want to recapture after Labour ended a century of one-party rule in 1994, two branches of Tesco will house polling stations: all part of a drive to raise voter awareness in the town (and to avoid headlines about the end of the Blair honeymoon if they fail).

In Italy, France, Germany and Denmark — where turnouts range up to 85 per cent — they don't have this problem probably because constituencies are small enough for local residents to identify with elected representatives, who are themselves less circumscribed by central government dictat. Mr Prescott has a point about media coverage: as local papers shrink or give way to free sheets, traditional coverage of municipal politics has all too often given way to pag.

What else can Britain do? In our Society pull-out today, Michael Young launches a new initiative to promote community government (including neighbourhood functions) which could run in parallel with bigger bodies like the proposed Greater London Assembly. The referendum on the Mayoral project may raise turnout in the capital on May 7. And in the longer run the chance to vote for Jeffrey Archer or Glenda Jackson, providing a more effective executive form of local government on the French or US model, may raise it permanently. It is worth a try. Compulsory voting or forms of PR could break the one-party stranglehold which leads to "rotten borough" politics in leafy shire and inner city alike. Labour ministers neither rule them in or out, but say they are so busy reconstructing other corners of the constitution that they cannot address that issue this side of the general election.

Letters to the Editor

Dog days and home truths

MICHELLE Hanson's column (Dog Days, April 20) struck a chord. The premonition for my dog's insurance has jumped from £104 in 1996 to £140.50 in 1997 to £149.50 in 1998. I have a four-year-old dog and have never claimed pet insurance. I was told the rise was due to increased vet's fees. My vet's fees have not increased by 45 per cent in 24 months. Is it right the veterinary profession should be maligned in this manner? Karina Miles, London.

TOO used to find snoring amusing (Pass Notes, April 20), until my dear friend, Clare, died of it in December 1996, at the age of 46. As a sufferer of sleep apnoea, she was in a permanent state of exhaustion because she would wake up whenever her breathing stopped, and she acquired the habit of taking an evening nap to compensate for her sleep deprivation. One evening, when her breathing stopped, she never woke up. Claude Shields, Aylesbury, Bucks.

RE the government's homework policy: are they trying to bring the family closer together by initiating conversation between parent and child about who has the longest working week? Mike Birkenshaw, Hull.

READING, Berks, even makes its bad reputation a selling point. I was recently given a book about Reading entitled *A Much Maligned Town*. Unfortunately, the title was printed in a script which made it in much less than a J Street (Letters, April 20) may be interested to know that my wife and I have long used "a Beggars of Despond" to refer to a chaotic situation. Henry Wickens, Loughborough.

Ulster relives spring '68

JONATHAN Steele's tour du monde to establish the last significance of 1968 has an odd omission — Northern Ireland. During the spring and summer of '68, many thousands of our ordinary citizens were mobilising to assert our rights in the United Kingdom. The state-sanctioned violence unleashed on us on October 5, 1968, in Derry city also resonated around the world, thanks to a fortuitously located TV crew. Thirty years later, we survivors have just seen the first genuine evidence of a potential solution of Hobsbawm's "neither an end nor a beginning, but only a signal". As Emily Dickinson put it, "I write to fall, infinite to venture". This time, we shall not be overcome. Seán Hopkins, Windsor.

I was disappointed to see that British voters so underestimate the role of John Hume in the peace process (Mowlan and Blair given credit for deal, April 18). According to your poll, only 7 per cent of British voters thought Mr Hume deserved the credit. People have apparently forgotten that it was John Hume who began the peace process with his controversial dialogue with Gerry Adams in 1983. At the time, Unionist MPs accused Mr Hume of "lying down with dogs and rising with the fleas". The UFF launched bomb attacks against SDLP politicians explicitly as a response to the Hume-Adams talks. John Major, as prime minister, for some time refrained from meeting Mr Hume to discuss the Hume-Adams initiative. It was, however, the Hume-Adams talks which led to the Downing Street Declaration and ultimately to the inclusive inter-party talks. David O'Sullivan, London.

YOUR otherwise excellent Leader (April 20) was wrong in suggesting that "Less often heard is the case for the nationalist community giving equal respect to the Protestant tradition." It was not the Protestant tradition to which nationalists hitherto refused to concede respect, it was the treatment of their people and the political claim to an area — far larger than any that could be claimed on democratic grounds. Denis Pethbridge, Banbury, Oxfordshire.

Eric Gill, depraved pervert

IT WAS I who triggered the discussion regarding Eric Gill's Stations of the Cross in Westminster Cathedral (Report, April 14; Letters, April 20). Much of the consequent press coverage has chosen to caricature Gill's artistic merit or to appeal to Christian values of redemption or forgiveness. Very little has been said about the gross sexual abuse Gill perpetrated against his little daughters. To put it very clearly, Gill wrote in his diary after spending half an hour with one daughter, "put P (penis) in a hole" (arse/ass-hole). We must print the truth.

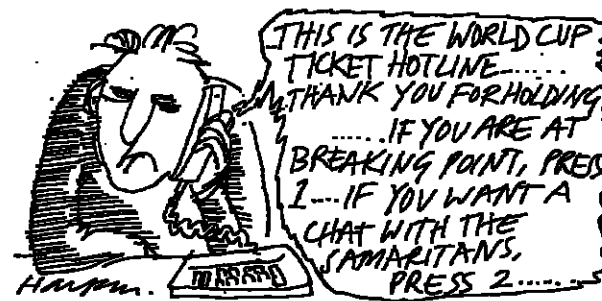
Apart from many other sexual offences, he sodomised his daughters. He used them naked for his art work. No one seems to acknowledge these victims, or the terrible suffering they must have experienced in an age when such things were

even more difficult to talk about than they are now. He also indulged in bestiality and frequent prostitutes even when married. His wife and children hardly mattered. I am willing to accept that his art is very good, even of substantial merit. I am also willing to accept that he, too, has the possibility of redemption. What I cannot accept is Cardinal Hume extolling the virtues of Gill's work on television, omitting completely his sexual depravity and conveniently ignoring Gill's children and their suffering. Furthermore I cannot accept that these works of art should remain to call Christian women or men to prayer, when we know that the same hands that carved them carved shame onto the bodies of his children. Margaret Kennedy, Founder, Christian Survivors of Sexual Abuse, London.

Soap diagnosis

WHEN someone going to tell Richard, the Archers' GP, that young Daniel has brucellosis. Remember the jolly times in uncle's cow shed and the cows with mastitis? I am surprised the vet didn't spot it: infection picked up from cows; incubation three weeks, slow onset, profuse sweating, cough, sore throat, how many more clues do they need? Maureen Swarwick, St Albans, Herts.

SAVOURED Nancy Banks-Smith's Brookside summary (April 18) but can help her on the reason for Sibbald's nickname. Far from his once being a jolly jack tar, it comes from his being a jolly bad window cleaner. This habit of wiping in a desultory circular fashion, missing the corners, led in inimitable Scouse logic, to a connotation of portholes, equals sailor, equals Sinbad. Mary Scanlan, London.



How to qualify for the World Cup

IT WILL be up at 6.30 this morning preparing for a three hour session trying to get through to the World Cup ticket hotline, which opens at 7.00. As a non-French citizen this will be my first opportunity to buy World Cup tickets at all.

I began planning a trip after the draw in December. Tickets from the five official UK agencies would cost a minimum of £300, including compulsory accommodation but not travel, rising to upwards of £1,400 for a game involving a home team.

After considering which of the venues to visit and when, I settled on Lens for the opening weekend of the tournament. It is easy to get to from England, no home nations would be there while we were, reducing our chances of being treated like undesirable, England play their final group match there and we would be able to go to games involving Jamaica, Croatia, Saudi Arabia and Denmark in Lens, and Holland v Belgium in Paris.

I signed up two friends for the trip. We're travelling to Lille, 15 km from Lens, on Friday June 12 and returning, after watching England v Tunisia in a Lille bar, the following Monday. Our four day trip will allow us to watch 12 games, nine of them in Lens, and we'll be drinking and mixing with the locals. All of this makes me an undesirable citizen in the eyes of the UK media.

No one in our party is a member of the England Travel Club. We're travelling independently. The hysterical reaction in the UK to the French tourism minister's invitation for people to do exactly what we're doing has both saddened and angered me.

Like 99 per cent of fans I love the game and have never been involved in violence. I want to go to a match in the World Cup finals, and have known which match I'd like to go to for five months. Wish me luck. Richard Selby, Widsa, Macclesfield, Cheshire.

Naught for our comfort: why Huddleston's death is such a loss

THE tributes to Trevor Huddleston are justifiably warm — but they've missed out his sense of fun (Obituary, April 21). In 1964, on the eve of President Mandela's inauguration, I was with Trevor and other friends at a restaurant near the station in Pretoria. The dining room had been restored to colonial splendour and Trevor recalled that he'd eaten there whilst attending apartheid trials in the 1950s. He looked at the menu and said "They probably think that I haven't been back for 40 years because of the prices. Do you think I'd better reassure them?"

He inspired love and hate. The latter is still around. But in Trevor's case, love won. Neil Kinnoch, Brussels.

true religion lies in the service of others and the work for justice and peace.

In the 1960s, a small group of us formed Jews Against Apartheid. We knew that our impact on the world was relatively small, but Archbishop Huddleston always made an effort to attend our Passover Seders held outside South Africa House each year. The world has lost a truly great man. Steve Miller, London.

OWE Trevor Huddleston a great debt of gratitude. Inspired by his book, *Naught for Your Comfort*, I decided to try to go to South Africa to work. Trevor Huddleston gave me the money for the fare from the Sharpeville Fund. In April 1961, I took up an occupational therapy post at Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto and became involved in so many ways in the long struggle for freedom in South Africa. Peggie Preston, London.



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OSCAR. The organisers would have loved to include a category called Best Supporting Actor, just to wind up the Americans by saying "The winner is... The Full Monty."

There was something disconcerting about an awards ceremony full of people like Lord Putnam of Blair's Arse, resplendent in their black bow ties and evening gowns, singing the praises of a film about blokes who are so skint they have to get their kit off in front of their neighbours.

Then the awards were punctuated with "a word from our sponsor", who was a director of Orange communications. "The future is brighter," he managed to say six or seven times in a three-minute speech/advertisement for his own company for sponsoring the film industry.

Film, like anything else now, depends on sponsorship. So the worrying thing is whether, by next year the

"word from our sponsor" will be given by Rupert Murdoch. By then it will be old news that he had no choice but to split from his wife, as she'd been making critical comments about China. And he'll have been forgiven for his split: "We're no longer compatible, so I'll try and get over it by watching Coventry versus Derby County, live and exclusive at 8pm. The action never stops." It will be almost forgotten that Murdoch's last attempt to patch it up was to ring Tony Blair and say: "Send some flowers to the missus, will you. Only I'm in a meeting with Jiang Zemin."

And he'll be forgiven that, as a committed Christian, he was determined to contradict the Bible on family values, so bought the rights, sacked the editor and ordered it to be rewritten.

For despite all the love this government professes for Brit-

ish talent, it leaves it to be almost entirely funded by businessmen, who will only back projects that make a profit.

Watching these film awards also reminded me that I didn't like The Full Monty. There. Someone had to say it.

The whole premise for why the main character needs the money is as ham-fisted a set-up, leading to an "I need cash" situation, as you get in The Beano. The first scene might as well have gone "Hi readers, I'm in big trouble with my ex-wife unless I can pay back the money I borrowed to spend on sweets. But don't worry — I've got a scheme which should bring back the cash."

The group despise their supervisor to such an extent that they wreck his chances at an interview for another job. Then they suddenly get rid of him with guilt, and over a period of seconds abandon years of resentment to invite them into their troupe. Even

in Teletubbies there's a few moments of tension before Po's forgiven for spilling the tubbystard.

The story's full of holes, and many of the jokes revolve around falling over and expressions that say: "Look at the size of that!" It's surprising that Barbara Windsor isn't a clerk in the dolls office, screaming "Here, can someone lay their hands on me girds?"

So how did it become so massively popular? Could it be that the Full Monty is the perfect frothy film for the carping elites? It acknowledges the dashed hopes of a generation — but confronts nobody. The likeable characters allow the viewer to feel sorry for the unemployed but, unlike the incomparably superior Brassed Off, never to feel angry for them. And for the American audience it tells them that even in Sheffield, if you're on the bottom the way

up is through initiative, albeit in our quaint English way.

Now there are plans for a film set in Liverpool, about another group of unemployed men battling their way to solvency with wild but hilarious schemes. A fiver says before the year's out there'll be a film set in Newcastle, about a group of unemployed shipbuilders who set themselves up as Sumo wrestlers.

So the rich, the right and directors of mobile phone companies can give awards to a film about unemployment, and not feel at all uncomfortable. Above all it's filled the main criteria for a piece of art being honoured in Blair's Cool Britannia: it's made a profit.

Over £100 million of it at the last count, and I reckon there's two things you can safely say about the men who've pocketed that. None of them were on the dole. And none of them had to get their knobs out to claim their share.

Analysis human

9am and 3pm Mon-Fri.

Robin Cook's tour of the global badlands

The Government promised to stay on ethical lines, seek to reach in getting regime to reform. The published yesterday.

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Robin Cook's tour of the global badlands

Sources: (1) Country Reports on Human Rights Practices For 1997, U.S. State department, Washington; (2) Annual Report on Human Rights 1998, Department for International Development, London.

Graphic Sources: Human Rights 1998, Amnesty International Report, 1997.

Graphophiles: Paddy Allen, Reader Mark Keating, Ian Black is the Guardian's Diplomatic Editor.

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Finance Guardian

Vauxhall pay offer gives bigger rise to workers if value of sterling falls



Flexible working: ... Vauxhall union members could agree to concessions in exchange for keeping work in Britain

PHOTOGRAPH: GAFRY WEBSTER

Deal heralds age of euro

David Gow
Industrial Editor

VAUXHALL'S 10,000 car workers yesterday began voting to accept a ground-breaking three-year pay and productivity deal that links extra cash to the strength of the pound.

The deal is seen as heralding more negotiations at European-based multinational firms on the basis of the single currency, the euro. Companies would be able to base investment decisions on a clearer analysis of unit labour costs and force greater competition for funds among plants in different countries.

Volkswagen, Europe's biggest car-maker, is preparing to conduct pay talks using the euro amid union fears that this could lead to savage wage cuts there and elsewhere.

White-collar staff at Vauxhall's two British plants, Luton and Ellesmere Port, yesterday voted unanimously for the deal which, for the first time, allows new employees to be taken on at lower pay rates and paves the way for continental-style annual hours contracts across swathes of British industry.

The deal, thrashed out in four weeks of secret talks, guarantees the future of the two plants in the face of threats by General Motors, Vauxhall's parent, to shift production to Germany, Belgium and Spain in its drive to

slash costs at its European operations by 30 per cent. But, in a striking example of US-style "concession bargaining", senior union officials have agreed to let Vauxhall hive off work to subsidiaries and outside firms which pay their workers less, use more part-time staff, vary holidays and time off, and introduce other measures to cut costs and the production more closely to the peaks and troughs of demand.

The deal, due to be endorsed by the bulk of Vauxhall employees in ballots on Thursday, would give a 3.5 per cent increase from August 3 — less than the 4.5 per cent rises agreed at Ford and Rover.

In year two, pay rates would rise by 3 per cent or the rate of inflation, whichever is higher, and in year three by the rate of inflation. But, in that final year, an extra 0.5 per cent would be paid if the average exchange rate for sterling fell below DM2.70 for two successive months.

Vauxhall officials said the link to the German mark came because the company exported 70 per cent of its output, the bulk of it to Germany. But experts said it presaged the transition to even tougher pan-European pay bargaining under the euro regime.

"This might well be the beginning of a trend which reflects intensified competition and globalisation and will get even more intense with the euro," Professor Keith Sisson of Warwick Business School said.

"Multinationals are beginning not merely to restructure their operations but to use co-located rates of pay and, in effect, an internal market for investment decisions. They are implicitly or even explicitly encouraging plants to compete with each other."

But David Yeandle, head of employment affairs at the Engineering Employers' Federation, said the deal reflected over-capacity and fierce competition specifically within the European car industry and did not set a pattern for the rest of manufacturing.

Under Vauxhall's deal, new employees will be taken on at 82 per cent of existing rates and reach the full rate after three years. They will also get five days less holiday.

Vauxhall last year secured the ability to increase or decrease the 38-hour working week by five hours to match demand, and the new deal enables the car firm to switch to three-shift working. It can choose when to bring in one of the annual three weeks of "lump" holiday in the summer.

Nick Reilly, Vauxhall's chairman, who last week tried to promote acceptance of the deal by giving up his £160,000 basic salary, said: "This is a realistic and responsible package which should help secure the long-term future of manufacturing operations in the UK."

and reach the full rate after three years. They will also get five days less holiday.

Vauxhall last year secured the ability to increase or decrease the 38-hour working week by five hours to match demand, and the new deal enables the car firm to switch to three-shift working. It can choose when to bring in one of the annual three weeks of "lump" holiday in the summer.

Nick Reilly, Vauxhall's chairman, who last week tried to promote acceptance of the deal by giving up his £160,000 basic salary, said: "This is a realistic and responsible package which should help secure the long-term future of manufacturing operations in the UK."

Certainly, there is no international consensus on whether this should happen. The OECD was forceful in its assessment that monetary policy has been tightened too much in Britain. The IMF, as the Bank of England governor, Eddie George, pointed out at Cranfield, is much more equivocal. But if one heard the IMF's chief economist Michael Mussa correctly

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Notebook

Inflation sirens stay on alert



Alex Brummer

THE March inflation data looks relatively benign. Certainly, by the UK's historic standards, a headline rate of 3.5 per cent (up 0.1 per cent) and an inflation rate excluding mortgages flat at 2.6 per cent ought to be little cause of policy concern.

But the prices figures mask some unpleasantness. Given the 30 per cent rise in sterling since February 1996 — the last 2.5 pence wobble notwithstanding — the inflation performance has not been that outstanding. Indeed, if sterling had been its usual flexible self over the last 15 months, or if the oil price had not been quite so weak, the UK's tendency towards being a high inflation economy would have been more marked.

One of the difficulties for the UK is that, although the underlying rate of inflation gives a better picture of what is really happening, the headline rate is what wage bargainers mostly use in setting pay rates — an area cited by the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, as one of serious concern.

It will be more worrying over the coming weeks in that the figure which the markets regard as critical in assessing what is happening in the labour market — that for average earnings — will be hopelessly out of date when it is released today. Instead of being based on February data, it will be January's, revised because the Office of National Statistics is struggling to put the figures on to a new statistical model. As a result, the Bank of England's monetary policy committee will be effectively flying blind on the earnings front when it meets in early May.

But it will have some harder evidence to work with. This includes the concentration of inflation in the fast growth service sector where prices are stoking up at 3.1 per cent, as against goods inflation where it is barely perceptible. The other factor which will make the data look worse in the months ahead is the Budget increase in petrol duties, higher council tax rates (up 8.5 per cent against 7 per cent last year) and the reduction in Miras tax relief from 15 per cent to 10 per cent. All of this may well be enough to swing the monetary policy committee behind a further rate rise.

Certainly, there is no international consensus on whether this should happen. The OECD was forceful in its assessment that monetary policy has been tightened too much in Britain. The IMF, as the Bank of England governor, Eddie George, pointed out at Cranfield, is much more equivocal. But if one heard the IMF's chief economist Michael Mussa correctly

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in Washington, a further increase, justified by the worsening external position may be necessary. There may be no interest rate trend at the top of the cycle, but the warning sirens have not yet been silenced.

Rank fears

First quarter trading statements from leisure groups are rarely insightful since the busiest months lie ahead in the holiday season. Nevertheless, Rank attracted more than its fair attention on the stock market following its earnings announcement for the first three months of 1998. The shares dropped 5 per cent, a big shift for a FTSE group, and the analysts were none too pleased.

The big focus of attention at Rank is the performance of chief executive Andrew Teare — who has demonstrated his ability to win through in boardroom battles and to spend money — but has not yet shown he can bring his capital investment to fruition in the bottom line. It is in the nature of Anglo-Saxon capitalism that the owners expect a quick turnaround and Mr Teare must be aware of his vulnerability.

The reality is that in the first quarter it was less the leisure business which did not perform, more the currency of its contribution from Xerox. If that is stripped out, profits were up, albeit not spectacularly. Anyone, like Mr Teare, who has shown the courage to invest rather than cut his way out of difficulty deserves some more time, and for the moment the institutions are willing to back him. But the next two quarters will be vital not just to the company's future, but to his too.

GEC splash

MUCH of George Simpson's focus at GEC has been on tidying up its European operations, with a view to GEC-Marconi becoming a dominating player in the new trans-European defence electronics industry. Now with the US Justice Department proving increasingly tough on the concentration of power in the American defence industry, he is taking a substantial tilt at the US with a 2500 million offer for Tracor, described by GEC as a leading supplier of defence electronics and information technology systems.

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George hints rates are at or near their peak

Mark Milner and Charlotte Denny

THE Bank of England governor, Eddie George, sought last night to help Britain's hard-pressed exporters with a broad hint that interest rates are at or near their peak.

The Governor made it clear the Bank could never be expected to be specific about the movement of rates, but stressed that recent disagreements within the monetary policy committee were over, at most, a "marginal" rise.

That is likely to be seen as a nod in the direction of the foreign exchange markets, where the relatively high level of UK interest rates, and the expectation that they could go higher still, have played a part in pushing up the value of the pound.

The Governor's speech came at the end of a day which had seen sterling drop below the DM3 level for the first time since early March. Analysts said the move was

driven by a combination of higher-than-expected growth in German money supply — which suggested the Bundesbank would raise German interest rates earlier than had been expected — and subdued UK inflation numbers.

Henman stumbles in Monte Carlo, page 13

Liverpool keep faith with Evans, page 14

Run-chase sees Worcestershire home, page 15

Parrott hits form at the Crucible, page 15

SportsGuardian

Gascoigne losing race to be fit

Hoddle urges England to adopt a 'World Cup mode'

David Lacey says that England's coach is intent on a solid win over Portugal tonight to restore public faith for France 98

GLENN HODDLE's faith in healers needs to be reciprocated at Wembley tonight by a reaffirmation of the public's faith in England. Certainly a solid victory over Portugal would restore confidence in his team's World Cup prospects after the 2-0 home defeat by Chile and an indifferent 1-1 draw in Switzerland.

Hoddle's confirmation that for the past 18 months his players have been availing

themselves of the healing powers of Eileen Drewery, a spiritual acquaintance of 20 years' standing, has lived up to the preliminaries no end. Otherwise the story has been the familiar one of injuries disturbing Hoddle's preparations, with Paul Gascoigne once more the principal concern.

The England coach left Gascoigne out of the squad for last month's 1-1 draw in Switzerland because of his lack of match practice. Now Hoddle

rates the player's chances of returning tonight as "60-40 against" because of the ankle injury he has been carrying since joining Middlesbrough from Rangers.

"Gascoigne is struggling to be fit for this game," Hoddle admitted yesterday. "I don't think he needs an operation but we've got to get him fit by the end of the season and playing him now could be a risk long-term. It could keep him out of football for two to three weeks, which we can't afford."

It is unlikely, given the player's continuing fitness problems, that Hoddle now regards Gascoigne as part of the spine of England's World Cup team which he intends fielding against Portugal tonight, a spare rib, perhaps. Presumably the spinal column will start with David Seaman in goal and run through Tony Adams, Paul Ince and Teddy Sheringham to Alan Shearer up front. Paul Scholes looks the obvious alternative to Gascoigne.

Hoddle's team selections are seldom predictable but there is no obvious reason why the remaining gaps should not be filled by David Beckham and Graeme Le Saux on the flanks, and David Batty in midfield and Sol Campbell one of the centre-backs alongside Adams. Gary Neville rather than Gareth Southgate may be the other.

Portugal failed to qualify for the World Cup but are still regarded by Hoddle as an ideal test for England at this stage. Certainly their intricate passing game bears comparison with Colombia, England's last opponents in the



Stretching a point... Oceano Cruz (right), called into the Portugal squad at the age of 35, trains at Wembley yesterday

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARON

Redknapp fights France deadline

Ian Ross

JAMIE REDKNAPP has refused to concede that his chances of making this summer's World Cup finals are over.

Although the 24-year-old Liverpool midfielder damaged medial knee ligaments during Sunday's Premiership game at Coventry City, he is adamant that he will play senior football again before the end of the season.

England's coach Glenn Hoddle has already said that any player unable to

finish the domestic campaign because of injury would be unlikely to win a place in his final squad of 22 for France.

"I hope to be playing again before the end of the season," said Redknapp yesterday after returning to Merseyside to begin intensive treatment.

Liverpool's manager Roy Evans said: "Obviously he has no chance of playing in our weekend game at Chelsea but we don't think he will be out more than two weeks. What we will do now is assess and treat Jamie's injury ourselves."

opening phase, although their attack is unlikely to possess the sort of cutting edge Marcelo Salas gave Chile when they won at Wembley in February.

Hoddle has asked his players to be in a "World Cup mode" tonight, which would be an advance on the indifferent performances against Chile and Switzerland that have taken some of the gloss off the pleasure of qualifying

"If we can get a good win under our belts against a good-quality side then the momentum will start building up again," the England coach observed, "but if we don't win it will not be a disaster."

The result is always important in an international but the date we're working towards is June 15, when we meet Tunisia in the World Cup. We all know that, come kick-off time in Marseille, whatever the hap-

pened in the past will be out of the window."

Psychics included, although yesterday Hoddle denied ever having had a working relationship with Uri Geller. "I met him once four years ago," he explained, "and I've not seen him since. I've not had any association with him, nor has the FA."

However, he continued to defend the healing powers of Mrs Drewery with the calm conviction of a true believer. Undaunted by such headlines as Heaven Help Us and Hoddle's Barny Army, the England coach predicted that "in years to come healing will just be the norm."

Tonight's game coincides with the release of the official England World Cup song. Entitled, with stunning originality, On Top of the World, it has a backing by the Spice Girls, presumably in the hope

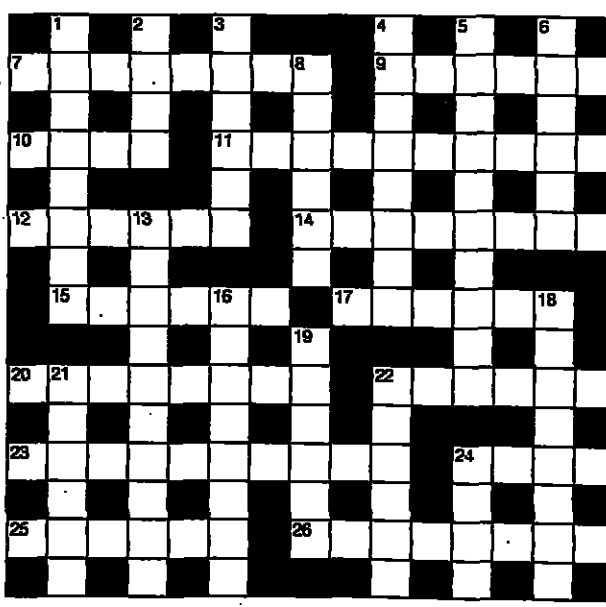
that Girl Power will inspire goal power.

Given the fuss about faith healers and spoon-benders, a reworking of the Scaffold hit concerning medicinal compound might have been more appropriate. Or one of Spike Milligan's nonsense numbers: "I talk to the trees, that's why they put me away..."

ENGLAND (probable): Seaman; O'Neill, Adams, Campbell, Beckham, Ince, Batty, Le Saux; Gascoigne or Scholes; Sheringham, Shearer.

Guardian Crossword No 21,255

Set by Araucaria



Across

7 Not acid — that's possibly all OK instead of carbon (8)

9 Bull rider who became a continent (5)

10 In the course of the morning the instincts are to follow (4)

11,12 Male rep takes in setter, but taking in solver is a way of firm disposal (10,3-5)

14 Whether the male is an insect or perhaps a hippopotamus (8)

15,17 Heirlooms whose 26 one can vilify, realm's being involved (5,6)

20 Gay man unwilling to go to a South American city (8)

22 Take-off will be profitable without punishment (8)

23 Fighting dog can back bills (10)

24 Pole (length) could be 2 (4)

Down

1 Pudding for the excellent and the flawed (4-4)

2,3 Maltreated novelist outside laid out on bed (4,4,2)

3 Arrangement for something to pray on? (6)

4 If snug he may appear, it's from conformity with the elements (4,4)

5 First cause of piano note in river (5,5)

6 Back with time, it's before the piano (6)

8 See 2

13 No change to setter's aspiration, no change to setter's adjuration (2,2,6)

16 There's a song-like quality in Sicily, Mr. Turner (8)

18 Payment swallows benefit, which stinks (8)

19 Provide with feeble excuses for a loose hunter? (3,3)

21 Visual effect of a curl after love (6)

22 Ancient weapon (5)

24 Tell the starter what to do with the pudding (4)

CROSSWORD SOLUTION 21,254

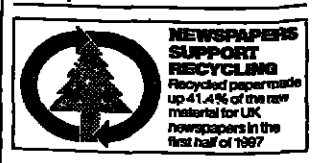
Across: 7. BASS, 9. BULL, 10. FOLLOW, 11. SETTER, 12. SOLVER, 14. HIPPO, 15. VILIFY, 17. REALM, 20. SOUTH, 22. TAKE-OFF, 23. FIGHTING, 24. POLE.

Down: 1. PUDDING, 2. MALTRATED, 3. NOVELIST, 3. PRAY, 4. CONFORMITY, 5. CAUSE, 6. BEFORE, 8. 2, 13. ASPIRATION, 16. SICILY, 18. PAYMENT, 19. FEIBLE, 21. VISUAL, 22. ANCIENT, 24. STARTER.

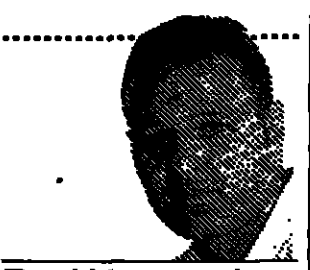
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ABPPT



Paul Hayward

Come on Eileen, I swear you mean everything

THE current furore over the presence of a faith healer in the England camp conjures up images from Arthur Miller's seminal play The Crucible. "The whole country's talkin' witchcraft!" walls one of the girls found dancing in the woods. There are strange goings-on down at Bisham Abbey and the people are afeared.

There are few things quite so hilarious as a country in ferment in the run-up to a World Cup. And there is a contradiction, surely, in arguing that footballers can perform with ravenous pain-killing jabs

that hasten the onset of chronic knee and back problems but shouldn't be consulting a nice lady called Eileen who has taken up residence inside the England camp.

We're talking Eileen Drewery, a faith-healing friend of Glenn Hoddle's. Everybody knows that nobody called Eileen is capable of doing anyone any harm.

Our Eileen has a special room at the team headquarters at Burnham Beeches where players are being encouraged to seek treatment for whatever ails them physically or spiritually. We can only imagine some of the conversations. To Alan Shearer: "What seems to be the problem?" Shearer: "Who said there's a problem? It's not for me to say either way." Or to Paul Gascoigne: "I can fit you in at two on Thursday." Gazza: "Er, I was hoping to take the whole of May."

Among those lining up to condemn Hoddle yesterday were members of the burgeoning sports psychology industry, some of whom are extremely skilled in manipulating the delicate psyches of athletes, and some of whom are complete charlatans.

Robbie Fowler is one of the few players who have publicly expressed misgivings about being encouraged to see Mrs

Drewery in her coven. Fowler says that as a good Catholic boy he will "go and see the local priest" if he needs guidance.

Big deal. Hoddle promotes faith healing. Fowler consults a man who believes in miracles he's read about in a 2,000-year-old book and disposes wafers that are supposed to represent the body of Christ.

THERE is, among football folk, a deeply held suspicion of any form of healing that doesn't involve a 10-grand trip to Harley Street. The history of spiritual exploration among footballers begins and ends with Davidicke, who, everyone agrees, is thoroughly off his bike.

There is a sub-culture of Christianity football (particularly among Afro-Caribbean players), and some clubs employ their own chaplains, but the automatic assumption is that anyone from outside conventional religion or medicine is probably a refugee from Waco.

This is not to say that bringing Eileen Drewery into the England camp is a particularly smart move by the England coach. It opens him to ridicule at a time when all PR gaffes ought to be avoided if only to reduce unnecessary complications, and suggests an unhealthy element of com-

pulsion (did three-quarters of the squad really want treatment?).

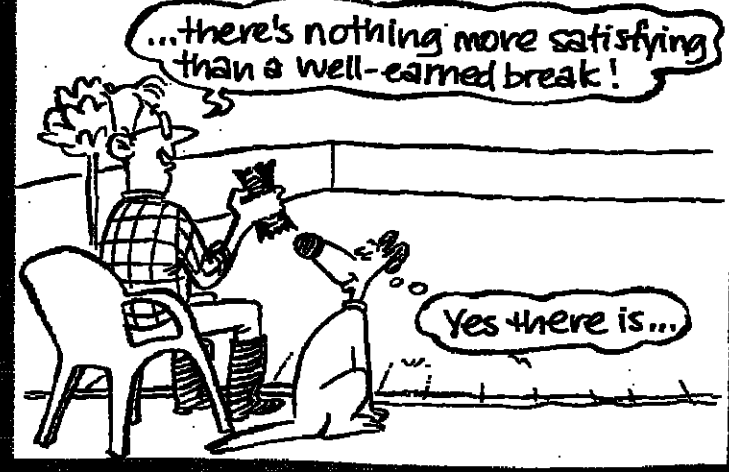
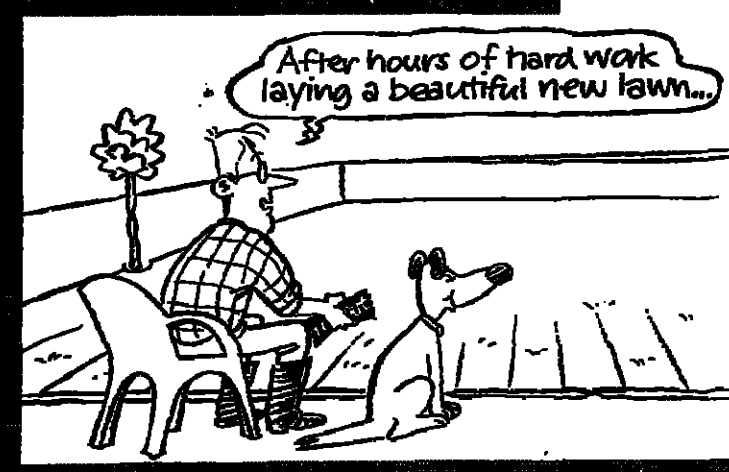
Fowler stayed for five minutes as a courtesy to Hoddle. Others might think they are "not one of us", to borrow a phrase from Margaret Thatcher, if they prefer the snooker room or the games console.

Mrs Drewery presumably doesn't administer steroid injections or potentially harmful antibiotics, or indoctrinate players with a particular set of beliefs. Faith healing by itself won't cure a torn cruciate ligament or even a thigh strain. But it might encourage a sense of well-being or persuade players to think about their bodies in a way that doesn't involve scalpels or drugs.

The FA is at pains to point out that Uri Geller has no formal connection with the England squad, despite his claims to the contrary. Hoddle is interested in bending free-kicks, not spoons, and the only crystals in the team kit-bag will be Radox. Eileen Drewery, too, will be left at home when the ship sets sail for France, where the laying on of hands will attract a yellow card.

Harmless stuff, then, most of it, but Hoddle might be well-advised to tread The Crucible. Its hero, John Proctor, flounders up on the gallows.

TimeOut by Cadbury



صدا من الامم